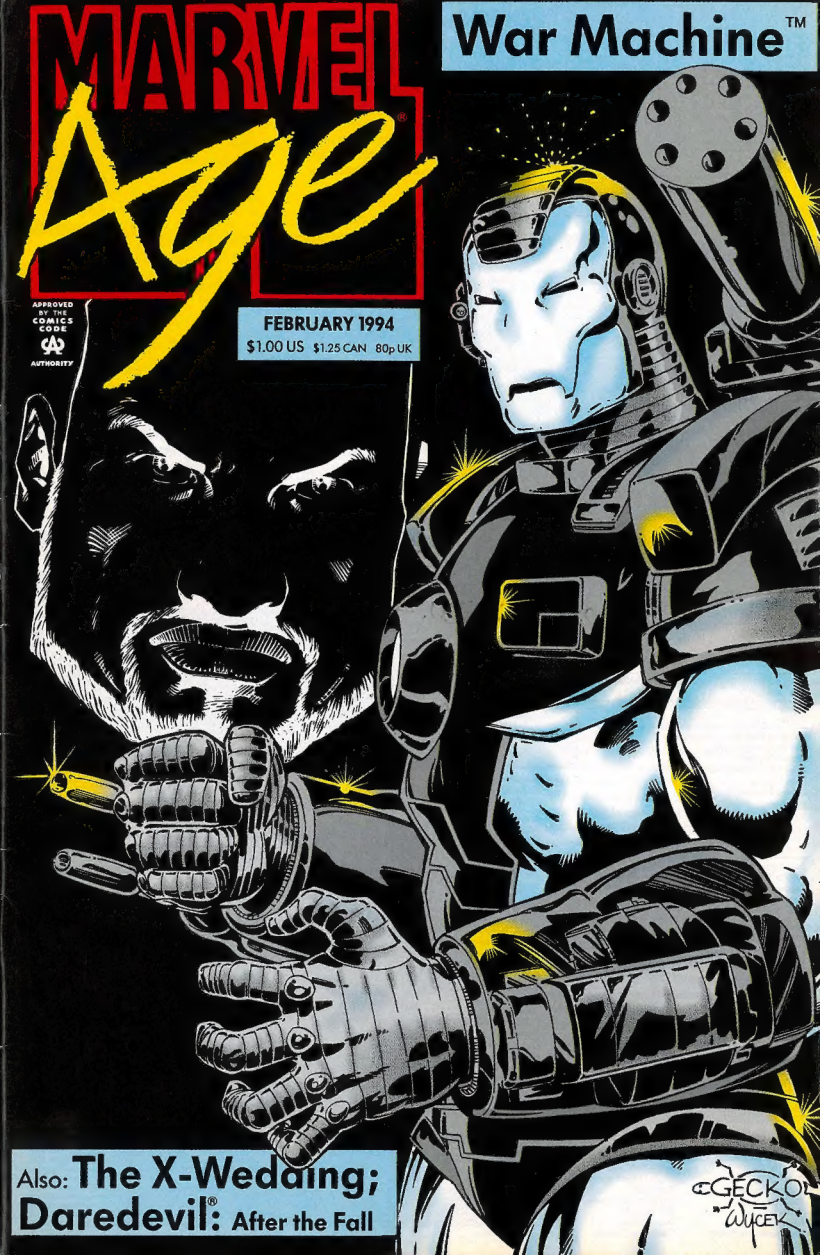
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EDITORIAL

Recently we received an intelligent, thought-provoking correspondence from Thomas R. Howland of Deerfield, IL, addressing a number of issues that have been discussed at length within these pages. His opinions were well-stated, and probably would have found their way into the letters page, had it not been for his letter's length.

Please try to keep your letters concise and to-the-point, focusing on the issue that is of most importance to you. That way you make room for a *number* of letters to see print on the letters page, and rather than turning it into a monologue, we get a broad-based forum for discussion.

Here at **MARVEL AGE** we *do* read the mail and, often pull letters that address the pertinent topics of the day, to copy and share them with the rest of the Marvel team, so that your concerns receive the appropriate consideration. Your voices are heard.

And the winners are. . .

We've chosen the winners in the **MARVEL AGE VIDEO SWEEPSTAKES**, and they are:

Super Nintendo *Spider-Man/X-Men*:
Bob Cherry of Pittsburgh, PA
Edward Elbert of Nanakuli, HI
Eric Mayerchak of Northampton, PA

Sega Genesis *X-Men*:
Tristan Alyn Milam of Huntsville, AL
Thomas D. Siterlet of Ann Arbor, MI
Nelson Soto of Ballston Spa, NY

Congratulations one and all. By the time everyone is reading this, your prizes are safely in your hands, and you've probably been acting super heroes for months.

Last, but far from least. . .

At the time of this writing (the beginning of November), Jack Abel — The World's Toughest Proofreader — is recovering from a serious illness. Jack should be back with us soon, and if any of you grammar aficionados want to wish Jack well, just send those cards and letters to him here at Marvel. We'll see to it he gets them!

See you soom, Jack.

— *Steve Saffel*

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Up Front

BREAK THE CHAIN UPDATE:

BREAK THE CHAIN, the comics and music project teaming Kyle Baker with rap singer **KRS-1**, has been delayed "so that we can finalize plans to get it into even more record outlets, as well as the comic book stores," Editor Mort Todd explained. "This way we can be sure it will reach the *huge* audience it's meant to reach." A new release date will be announced as soon as it is available.

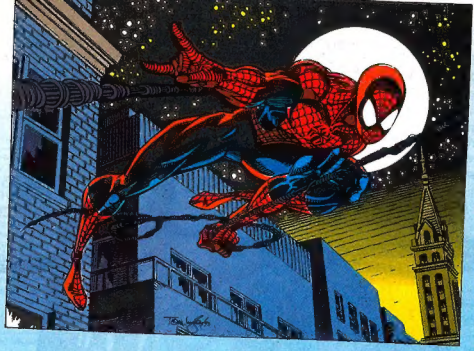
A SHROUD OF INTRIGUE

The Shroud, the mysterious character from the pages of **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN** and **AVENGERS WEST COAST**, will star in his own four-issue limited series scheduled to begin in January. Written by Mike Barr, known for his work on *The Maze Agency*, and on *DC's Batman: Year Two* and *Batman: Full Circle*, **THE SHROUD** will guest star Spider-Man, who will assist the shadowy hero in battling two evil factions: the Cult of Kali — the "family" that abandoned the lonely hero long ago, and the mob. Penciler M.C. (**U.S.AGENT**) Wyman and Malcolm (*Sandman*, *Batman/Dracula*) Jones round out the art team.

WOLVERINE BLUES

The metal rock group *Entombed* has paid homage to the savage X-Man with *Wolverine Blues*, a work described by Columbia Records as being "about aggression, alienation, and ferocious survival" — key elements that make Wolverine who he is today. As described by a Columbia spokesperson, "Entombed's cutting edge 'grind-core' metal sound sets new standards for hard rock music in the '90s by combining technical musicality and simple rock & roll song structures with the most extreme elements of metal and punk rock."

And, in a historic collaboration between Marvel and Columbia, when *Wolverine Blues* hits the stores in February, the CD will be accompanied by a collectors edition comic book featuring a classic Ann Nocenti/John Bolton Wolverine tale, with a brand new cover by Dave DeVries. This album will be available *both* in record stores and comic book shops, and a music video featuring Wolverine will be released at about the same time.



PRIMAL SCREEN

Computer mavens who were afraid of the Michaelangelo virus have something even more awesome staring at them from the computer screen now that Marvel Comics and Berkeley Computer Systems, Inc., have teamed up to produce *Marvel Comics Screen Posters* for the Macintosh and any personal computer (PC) running the Microsoft Windows program.

Berkeley Systems is best known for the *After Dark* screen savers, entertaining images that decorate the computer screen and reduce the wear on the monitor during time the computer is not in active use.

More than 35 different *Marvel Comics Screen Posters* are available now in software outlets and some comic book stores. Stars include Spider-Man, The X-Men, Silver Surfer, Ghost Rider, The Hulk, and The Punisher in scenarios such as hero vs. villain battles, milestone covers, and origins. Exclusive, custom-designed artwork has been used, and each package includes character biographies and Marvel trivia.

CAPTAIN AMERICA NO MORE?

January's **CAPTAIN AMERICA #425** marks the traumatic end of an era and the beginning of a year-long story arc entitled "Fighting Chance." In this special issue (forty-eight pages and a foil-embossed cover), Captain America learns that the Super Soldier serum from which he derives his strength is rapidly causing his body to deteriorate, presenting him with a choice. He can continue to fight crime, which will leave him paralyzed by year's end, or he can begin searching for a replacement Captain America!

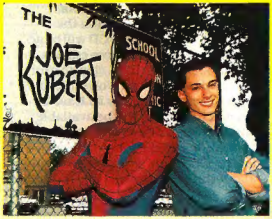
Writer Mark Gruenwald promised that, whatever Cap decides, his longtime foes will only add to his suffering. Baron Zemo, Super Patriot II, Zeitgeist, Superia, Modam, and others will add to the mayhem in "Fighting Chance," as will two *new* villains as created by Gruenwald, penciler Dave Hoover, and inker Danny Bulanadi.

The effects of Cap's fight for his very life will spill over into **THE AVENGERS** as he has to relinquish his role with that super team, and will become even more apparent during the "Tree of Knowledge" storyline in the pages of **DAREDEVIL.**

IF YOU RESTRICT YOUR ACTIVITIES TO NORMAL HUMAN LEVELS, YOU COULD PROBABLY MAINTAIN MOBILITY AND MUSCULAR USAGE FOR THE REST OF YOUR NATURAL LIFE.

CLASS ACT

Brandon Vietti, a nineteen-year-old resident of Fresno, California, has been named the winner of the first annual *Marvel Comics Scholarship* established at The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in the interest of nurturing aspiring artists and perpetuating excellence in the comics medium. It entitles the recipient to full tuition at the three year art program and an apprenticeship at Marvel Comics.



The Kubert School is the only fully accredited institution in the world devoted to the art of cartooning. Founded in 1976 by Joe Kubert, who is legendary for his work in comics, and his wife, Muriel, the school has grown from its original enrollment of twenty-two students to its current enrollment of three hundred, and the faculty includes many of the most accomplished artists in the comics industry. According to Terry Stewart, president of Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., "There is no better training ground for a career in cartooning than The Kubert School."

Vietti was chosen for the scholarship on the basis of art samples he submitted during the application period, which were judged a panel of artists. "With this ongoing support from Marvel, each year we will will be able to offer a deserving individual like Brandon the opportunity to hone the skills essential to success in any field where cartooning is applied," Kubert said.

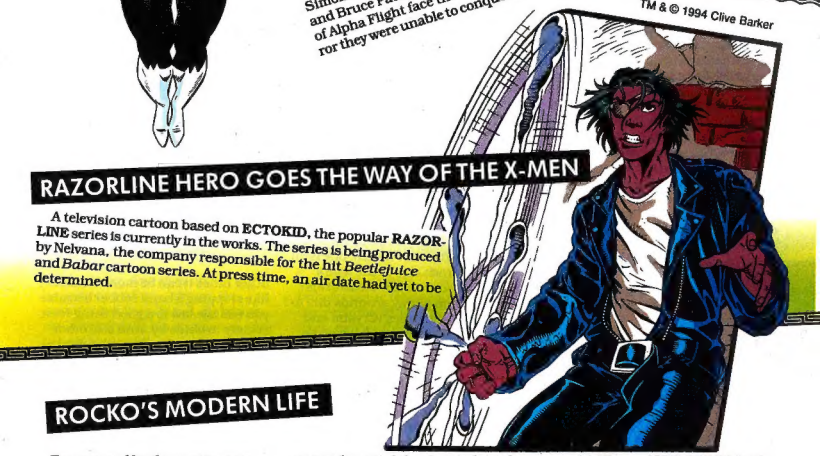
ALPHA FLIGHT TOUCHES DOWN

The long-running **ALPHA FLIGHT** series will conclude in January with the publication of its one hundred and thirtieth issue, a 48-page spectacular with events in the final issue that will lead into the premiere of the **NORTHSTAR** limited series in February.

In this finale, a product of creators Simon Furman, Dario Carrasco, Jr., and Bruce Patterson, the members of Alpha Flight face the unseen horror they were unable to conquer as a common nightmare they all experienced in issue #128.

Northstar will then be forced to pay for the sins of the entire Alpha Flight team in the four issue **NORTHSTAR** limited series. Every tie he has to his life as a hero will be cut, and the only people who will have anything to do with him are a group of terrorists who plan to use him to further their own agenda.

NORTHSTAR, a 32-page $1.75 title, will be created by Furman, Carrasco, Jr., and Patterson.



TM & © 1994 Clive Barker

RAZORLINE HERO GOES THE WAY OF THE X-MEN

A television cartoon based on **ECTOKID**, the popular **RAZORLINE** series is currently in the works. The series is being produced by Nelvana, the company responsible for the hit *Beetlejuice* and *Babar* cartoon series. At press time, an air date had yet to be determined.

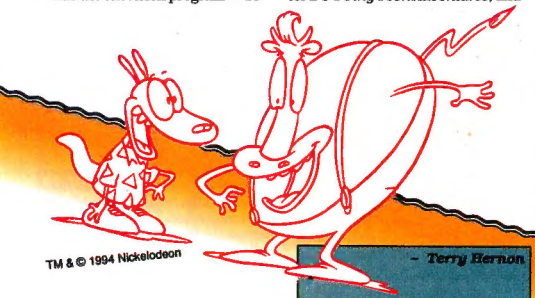
ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE

Encouraged by the continuing success of the comic book adaptation of Nickelodeon's *Ren & Stimpy*, Marvel plans a comic based on *Rocko's Modern Life*, the network's new and popular "Nick Toon."

Scheduled to premiere in March, the *Rocko's Modern Life* comic will — like the television program — be centered around the slapstick trials of a wallaby struggling to make it on his own after moving out of his parent's house. Editor Mike Lackey has assigned two creative teams to the book in order to include two to three short features in every 32-page issue. Joey Cavalieri, known for his stories for **DC's** *Tiny Toon Adventures*, and penciler Darren **(SHE-HULK)** Auck make up one team, while writer John **(WHAT THE?!)** Lewandowski joins Ed Lazellari, who will make his debut as a penciler in *Rocko's Modern Life*, for the other. Lazellari previously worked as a colorist for **REN & STIMPY** and **VENOM: FUNERAL PYRE.** Lackey has signed Gary **(BIKER MICE FROM MARS)** Fields to ink the entire book.

Lackey, also the new **REN & STIMPY** editor, is delighted with his new project. "Fabian [Nicieza] did me a great service by giving me **REN & STIMPY** to edit," he enthused. "Not only is **REN & STIMPY** a successful book, but now it's under that same umbrella as *Rocko*."

To double the fun for readers of both series, Lackey added, "We hope to have a **REN & STIMPY** crossover with *Rocko* **in upcoming issues. But nothing is definite — we want to have a really great story where all the characters can shine."**



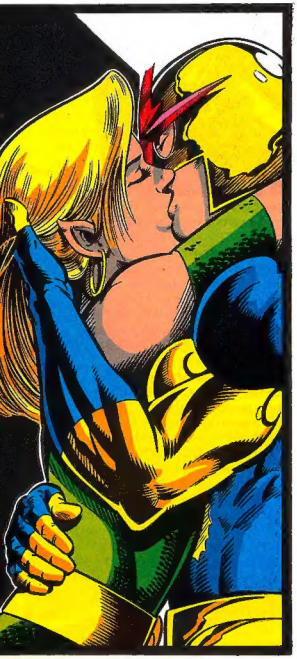
TM & © 1994 Nickelodeon

– Terry Hernon

Mark's REMARKS

Reed Richards and Sue Storm.
Yellowjacket and the Wasp.
Prince Namor and Lady Dorma.
Quicksilver and Crystal.
Vision and the Scarlet Witch.
Black Bolt and Medusa.
Hawkeye and Mockingbird.
Ka-Zar and Shanna the She-Devil.
Daimon Hellstorm and Patsy Walker.
Bruce Banner and Betty Ross.
Scott Summers and Madeline Pryor.
Prince Namor and Marrina.
Doctor Strange and Clea.
Peter Parker and Mary Jane Watson.

What do all these couples have in common? We met them as singles and then they tied the knot. Got hitched. Marched to the altar. They all became walking proof that comic book characters grow, mature, and change, that status quos are not unalterable.



It's inevitable. You get two characters romantically inclined, and suddenly the letters start pouring in suggesting that the two get married . . . *quick*. After constantly being exposed to this propaganda, a conscientious writer will start to think, "Yeah, why don't I marry off so and so?" You can't blame the fans for their pro-marriage campaign: they're just expressing their love for the characters and their wish that they be happy. You can't blame the writers for seriously listening and, in some cases, succumbing to the marriage-mavens: they love the characters, too, plus they care what the fans want. Furthermore, writers like to write what they know about, and many of them eventually succumb to the marriage phenomenon themselves. Hence you've gotten the dozen or so Marvel marriages so far chronicled, and there are two more coming up in '94.

But let's now take a dispassionate look at marriage in as far as our Marvel heroes are concerned, and ask ourselves, "Is marriage a good thing?" Let's start with the statistics. Out of the fourteen couples listed above, a staggering five are defunct due to the death of the spouse, one ended in divorce (Hank and Janet), one ended in annulment (Vision and Scarlet Witch), one is on shaky grounds due to the wife's mental condition (the Hellstorms), another is on shaky grounds due to the wife's infidelities (Crystal and Pietro), one couple has been separated but is apparently reconciled (Ka-Zar and Shanna), one couple is estranged (Bruce and Betty), and one couple is separated (Strange and Clea). This leaves two intact couples not currently experiencing marital difficulties: Black Bolt and Medusa, and Peter and Mary Jane.

A pretty sobering track record for Marvel's marriage-minded. Statistically speaking, the Marvel heroes are even worse off than real-world couples, for whom the divorce rate hovers around 50 per cent. You may say, "But it's not the characters' fault their marriages end up dashed to the rocks — it's the fault of those darn writers who can't see a good thing without wanting to break it up!" Well, yes. . .and no.

Look at it from the writer's perspective for a moment, and ask yourself these leading questions: What is the key to any good series? Drama. Without drama, the superheroic becomes the super-mundane. Where does drama come from? From characters being placed in situations where they care about something or other. Sometimes what they *care* about can be mere survival, as when a vengeful villain attacks for the umpteenth time;

other times it can be more idealistic, like stopping a bank robber because you feel the law is a good thing for a society to abide by. And still other times, a character cares about other characters. Can character relationships be dramatic? They not only can, but they should be. Without drama, these relationships will seem flat and incidental, rather than vital and compelling. How can character relationships be dramatic? By having important, sometimes even life-and-death, matters to define and affect them.

Okay, so say you're writing two single characters and you want their relationship to be dramatic. What do you do? You give the relationship ups and downs, moments of doubt, setbacks, upswings, outside flirtations, moments of joy and terror, the whole gamut — all the while gently trending the level of feeling each has for the other ever higher. It is this upward trend the readership probably discerns, and which prompts them to request it reach its natural conclusion — matrimony.

A wedding is indeed a pinnacle for a relationship, its high point. It is no wonder that so many fairy tales end in "So they wed and they lived happily ever after." You want to leave your characters on a high note. But series characters, unlike fairy tale characters, continue in stories after

to have a wandering eye, it's a totally different thing for one of a married couple to have the same. For a writer to avoid giving a relationship problems is to avoid dealing with the relationship dramatically.

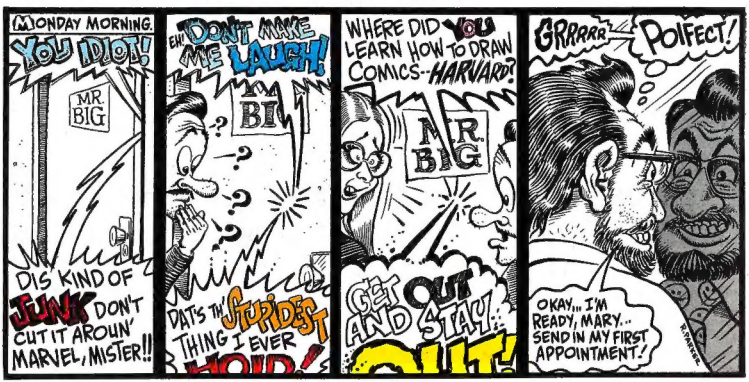
So even if you have two of the nicest, sweetest, best-matched couples who ever pranced across a comic book page, to get them married is to sentence them to greater hardship and heartbreak than if they had the sense to remain single indefinitely. Whenever I get a letter suggesting, say, that Captain America and Diamondback get married, I shake my head and wonder why would you want to mess them up like that? Unlike in real life, where marriage can be wonderful and fulfilling and thankfully undramatic, comic book marriages are just about he worst thing you can do to the relative happiness of two characters. (Actually, there is one thing even worse: have them become parents, but that's a subject for a whole 'nother column.)

So, Scott Summers and Jean Grey and Rick Jones and Marla, I have some unsolicited advice for you: 1. Don't get married. 2. Don't have kids. And 3. Don't say I didn't warn you.

the wedding. And they do not live happily ever after — drama *demands* that they do not. So where can a writer take his characters after the pinnacle of the marriage event? Can he or she try to make it a plateau rather than a pinnacle? No, not without draining the drama out of the relationship. Truly, the only place to go after two comic characters get married is. . .down. The only dramatic thing you can do with their relationship is to give it problems, expose it to pressures from without, pressures from within, gaps in expectation and results — all that messy stuff. And it is messy when you're dealing with the commitment that defines marriage. It's one thing for one of a dating couple

– *Mark Gruenwald*

THE BOSSMEN by RICK PARKER


MONDAY MORNING.
YOU IDIOT!
MR. BIG
DIS KIND OF JUNK DON'T CUT IT AROUN' MARVEL, MISTER!!
EH! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
BI
DAT'S TH' STUPIDEST THING I EVER
WHERE DID YOU LEARN HOW TO DRAW COMICS--HARVARD?
MR. BIG
GET OUT AND STAY OUT!
GRRRRR
POIFECT!
OKAY... I'M READY, MARY... SEND IN MY FIRST APPOINTMENT.

AFTER THE FALL, CAN DAREDEVIL GET UP?

If you can't stand the heat, get out of Hell's Kitchen.

Due to the cataclysmic events of the "Fall from Grace" storyline, Daredevil's neighborhood — and all of New York City — has reached the boiling point. In issues #319-325 they exposed and destroyed Daredevil's secret identity as blind attorney Matt Murdock, led to the creation of a brutal new costume, and precipitated the return of his sai-wielding lover, Elektra.

Series writer D.G. Chichester, artist Scott McDaniel, and editors Ralph Macchio and Pat Garrahy are celebrating Daredevil's 30th anniversary by infusing his adventures with a cutting edge attitude and controversial change. How did these innovations come about, and where are they leading the Man Without Fear?

The creative team revealed that the decision to revitalize the series was inspired by a combination of a pragmatic mentality and a genuine love for the character. "No one was really talking about the book anymore," Macchio revealed, "so I said, 'OK, let's get the book back in the spotlight.'"

Chichester elaborated: "We had already been planning for Daredevil's 30th anniversary. No one came in and said, 'bring back Elektra, change his costume.' It was a matter of all of us being interested in Daredevil and wanting him to have a greater exposure."

"Sometimes you have to break away a bit to generate this excitement," he added.

So the series' creators have launched innovations they hope will interest a new crop of followers, as well as those who may have dismissed Daredevil. Readers who have followed the series over the years, however, feel they are experiencing deja vu, asking, "Hasn't this been done before?" Throughout Matt Murdock's life, the hardluck hero has lost his sight, his father, his law practice, his home, a series of lovers, and his sanity. What distinguishes this shake up?

"The difference of this fall is that, before, he always returned to the status quo. We're not interested in the status quo — we're keeping the essential qualities of Daredevil, but we're moving him into new territory," Chichester pointed out.

Because his identity was revealed in "Fall From Grace," Matt Murdock faked his own death to protect those around him from danger. Now, instead of arguing for justice as an attorney, he'll be *bending* the law as "a con man in the strain of Paul Newman and Robert Redford (of the Oscar-winning film *The Sting*), pulling cons on street level crooks and getting information that he can use as Daredevil," Chichester said. "He's on the inside, making sure other cons pulled on innocent people fail — he's plugged into a street information network."

Not only will Daredevil exist as a slick-talking con man, he will also pretend to be sighted, which will provide unique challenges for the blind adventurer. "Until now, no one asked him, 'Hey, what color dress was that girl wearing?' or 'What does that sign say?'" Chichester said. "Now he'll have new problems, like a friend wearing red pants and a purple polka dotted shirt asking 'Does this go together?' How will he react? Will he feign color blindness? He'll be acting and reacting in order to cover up his blindness. This whole identity of a con man is a scam."

How will the world, knowing of Murdock's identity *and* death, react to this swashbuckler claiming to be Daredevil?

"The evil hasn't taken [Elektra] over,

"Heroes assume that this person in this new costume is someone else claiming the identity. They won't assume he's the same person. Everybody he's met before is now new territory to him — from the Kingpin to the Punisher to Spider-

Man," Chichester said.

Thrown into this chaotic cauldron is the return of Elektra — an iconic combination of beauty and violence, the embodiment of sex and death. Having been purged of her fury when she was resurrected by Murdock's love in **DAREDEVIL #190**, Elektra chose to reclaim this same dark side of herself at the close of 'Fall From Grace.' As with any person who returns after an absence, Elektra has grown and *changed*.

"We weren't going to use her unless we could move her forward. She's very different now, with this unpredictable element of the self. The evil hasn't taken her over, but it's definitely tainted her. She's given up her pure, cleansed self — now she's essentially a much more enlightened character, but has reclaimed this rage," Chichester commented.

"She has to balance these two facets of her character. On a personal level, she has to deal with her relationship with Murdock. His love brought her back, but how do you thank someone for doing that? She assumes he'll want her back again, but he's changed considerably during the time she's been away, and it's not that simple. We won't see Matt and Elektra running around Central Park, spinning in slow motion," Chichester continued.

"They're discovering their relationship all over again. . . Sure, on a hormonal or deep emotional level, some circuit breaker trips when they see each other, but all this stuff has happened between them and to them, so their psyches are telling them something else," Chichester elaborated.

Readers can also look forward to the return of his most infamous nemesis, Wilson Fisk — the Kingpin. Like Elektra, Kingpin is the dark *yin* to Daredevil's bright *yang*. Also like Elektra, he will return a changed person, Chichester promised: "We'll be setting up things for the reintroduction of the Kingpin starting in issue #326 [on sale in January]. Readers will be seeing how this guy works at a street level. You know, we've always heard him say, 'I started off on the streets and built myself up until I was living in a skyscraper,' but no one's ever seen this ascension. Well, we're not going to see that first rise, but we'll see a version of it replayed.

"He realized that, by living up in his skyscraper, that he got out of touch with his activities, that he put himself into a precarious position. He's vowed never to lose touch again — he's going to work with his hands on a day-to-day basis. You know,

Scott McDaniel & son

people have said that we've used the Kingpin in a brutal way, and we're saying, 'Yeah, we know — this guy's a thug.' There's nothing honorable about Wilson Fisk," Chichester stated.

This famous love/hate triangle and other themes introduced in "Fall From Grace" will be further explored with the opening of the follow-up storyline, the five part "Tree of Knowledge." Chichester set the scene for the next story arc: "New York is being besieged by horrible terrorist activities — kidnapping, hostage taking, the Hudson Ferry will blow up — it's unnerving a city that's already tightly wound. A coalition of terrorists claim responsibility for this, and those in authority, as well as some super hero groups like the Avengers and the Fantastic Four, set up a type of martial law in Manhattan. Certain civil liberties will be clamped down on, and military conditions will be set up."

"Daredevil sees the results of this activity on a street level and it doesn't sit well with him. Captain America becomes suspicious of this martial law and asks the other heroes if this isn't too convenient, wondering if they haven't bought into it too easily. He makes the decision to go off on his own, and begins some covert activity to investigate the terrorists. The story will feature the Snake Root and a completely revamped Hydra organization."

On a deeper level, this story will explore a theme that Chichester hopes to manipulate throughout the next year — the possession of information. "Information is power. The way it's used and misused will be a conflict in this series. This idea plays on many different levels: who has this power, what freedoms it gives, what it takes away, what secrets come out. Privacy is becoming general knowledge — that's a pretty terrifying idea," he said.

To help Daredevil cope with these frightening times, the creators will surround him with a new cast of supporting characters. "One of the key things we need to address, since Matt Murdock is 'dead,' is 'What kind of private life does he lead now?' I want to establish a new supporting cast — to recreate a world around him," Macchio noted.

"We're creating a group of four-to-five 'normal type' characters. We'll throw them into the soup and see how they interact with each other and Murdock. It's our intent to make the supporting cast very strong, to build up and emphasize the human interest side of the story," Chichester said.

Scott McDaniel described the new supporting cast as "interesting, street wise people. You'd go over to their place and crash out because they're fun to be with."

Despite the massive changes, series creators aim to preserve the unique aspect that separates Daredevil from the rest of the superhuman community — his simple humanity.

"This is somebody who is committed to justice and redemption, above all else. He's always willing to give someone a second chance. He's different than some heroes in that he'll take someone down brutally, but that won't sit well with him. He's going to look for a chance of advancing someone forward, not just taking them in. He tries to get to the problem at the core of someone's behavior. This is a character you can relate to. he's not from another planet, he's not made of blood and thunder. I think the key word with him is 'humanistic.'" Chichester said.

"He's a street vigilante, but not driven by insane motivations. It's easy to have compassion for friends, it's hard to have it for enemies," McDaniel expounded.

"He's a character [whose motivation is] about helping people around him, about getting justice for those who can't find it. We're stressing the need [for] the lawyer half of himself. He's been one for so long, maybe he has taken this for granted. If you take something away, people appreciate it more," Chichester stated.

"The lawyer/vigilante dichotomy will always be there. He will always be a character who views compassion as the most valuable attribute. Although he's visually strong, he's really a writer's character, because there's always some new direction to take him in, and yet you can still have that core of him intact," added Macchio.

"The whole identity of a con man is a scam"

Although some may call the Man Without Fear a "writer's character," McDaniel's razor-honed visuals are marking **DAREDEVIL** as an artist's book as well. McDaniel's harsh, boldly stylized feel, his developing use of shadows and page layout, capture the unique direction of the series. Editorial support allowed McDaniel to unleash his art, which has drawn inspiration from a variety of sources including the work of Frank Miller and Jae Lee, yet stands distinct on its own. "His art's taken on a life of its own. He brings a look that **DAREDEVIL** hasn't had in a lot of ways," Chichester praised.

After 'Fall From Grace,' the creators hope to preserve this new, hard-edged feel while balancing it with the hero's sense of empathy. But in the city's mean streets, it doesn't hurt to walk tall and carry a big stick — or in Daredevil's case, a big billy club.

– Bill Rosemann

Hidden in the Folds

Hidden away in a filing cabinet — that's where the cover effect for **FORCE WORKS #1** was discovered.

A unique system never before seen in comics, it was perfected for the innovative series of maps known as *The World Unfolds*®. The patented process is ancient, derived from Origami, the oriental art of paper folding. It has never before been used for the likes of a super hero team, or to reveal the nature of death.

Stephan Van Dam, a native of Switzerland, developed it while he was a student at New York's Parsons School of Design. His system gave him the ability to fold paper into a neat package six times *smaller* than the unfolded original, one that is easily opened. Using his favorite 100 lb. sterling enamel litho-gloss paper stock — which gave Van Dam the stiffness necessary for maximum "fold memory" and enough flexibility to bend without tearing — he perfected his technique and employed it on several award-winning series of street guides to major world cities.

Working with an engineer, Van Dam developed a patented folding machine to manufacture his guides, a machine which can produce large quantities. His company, Van Dam, Inc., continues to produce more than 80 street guides and has added a line of pop-up *Eco Guides* which focus on the wonders of the earth and space.

"Stephan Van Dam had brought some samples into the office, and they were filed away for some time," recalled John Taddeo of Marvel's Marketing Department. "I was going through the files one day and remembered the Van Dam map was the most impressive fold-out I had ever seen. I figured that this could be used as a cover enhancement that has never been done before, and could only be done by Van Dam. I saw this as a good opportunity to try out a new, yet ancient technology."

The Van Dam Unfolds® technology was chosen for the cover of **FORCE WORKS #1** and the pop-up itself was designed to be mounted at an angle on the cover, for dramatic effect. "Basically, what we are going to do," Taddeo continued, "is have the artist draw a regular cover, which will be printed on the cover of the unfolded pop-up. If you were to pull the pop-up off the cover altogether, the underlying area would look the same.

"The pop-up itself will be sealed down on one edge with a 'fugitive' glue, which is resealable. When you open the pop-up, the resulting fold-out is *twice* the size of the comic book cover and has a die-cut insert in the center featuring a popular Marvel character. I can't say much about that without giving away the shocking events in the first issue. . . all I can say is that it features a dramatic battle aftermath and gives the reader the position of looking down on the results of that battle," he revealed.

The entire cover of **FORCE WORKS #1** will be supplied by Van Dam, Inc., for the insertion of the interior of the comic. The cover will be coated, giving it the rigidity necessary for years of enjoyment.

"We went with this idea because Unfolds inspires such a sense of mystery," Taddeo said. "When the cover pop-up is unfolded, the readers are going to get the answer to the mystery of which Marvel character is not going to survive. They will realize that the idea is that, when you follow the fold lines, you can find something hidden — something you never expected to see."

— Gary Guzzo

Stephan Van Dam and samples of the Unfolds® maps.

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The Gown

Nicole Miller

This is a girl who showed up for her first day at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters wearing a plaid skirt and a fashionable hat (**X-MEN #1, 1963**). Back then, it looked like Marvel Girl was off to Vassar, rather than joining a school that trains mutant super folks.

A few years, death, rebirth, and many, many adventures later, Jean Grey will marry her beloved Scott Summers. So the question is: what will Jean Grey wear?

The search for Jean's dress led to internationally renowned fashion designer Nicole Miller. As anyone can see from the sketch, Jean has come a long way in the fashion department. (Although the pending nuptials have created quite a stir, Jean is not the first Marvel heroine to don a *couture* creation. Mary Jane Watson stepped down the aisle with Peter Parker in 1986 wearing a Willie Smith gown.)

Ms. Miller, a designer with 17 fashion boutiques nationwide, has recently been affiliated with Marvel designing ties, vests, and other assorted licensed Marvel-wear. When the decision was made that Scott and Jean would say their "I-dos," Marvel's Consumer Products Department stepped in and suggested that, since Marvel was already fortunate enough to have worked with Nicole, it seemed logical to approach her to design the gown for the big event.

After Miller agreed to do so, Bob Harras (X-Group Editor), Suzanne Gaffney (Editor on **EXCALIBUR** and **SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE MANSION**), Lisa Geisenheimer (Consumer Products Director), Gloria Birulin (also of Marvel's Consumer Products Department), and I met with Nicole at her Seventh Avenue offices, in the heart of New York's fashion district. We brought her comics that prominently featured Jean Grey, and answered Miller's questions about who Jean is and who she *isn't*.

Nicole felt that, since Jean is a super heroine, it might be interesting to design a dress that was *totally* out of this world. We noted that, while that approach might work for a *Sht'Ar* wedding, Jean is an Earthling of style and sophistication, and her dress should reflect that. Miller accomplished her task by "constructing the dress using flat and shiny geometric pieces to create a stylized, yet feminine look," she explained. Just one look at the glamorous length, offset neckline, and body contouring shape shows that Miller successfully accomplished the task she had set for herself.

The finished product will make its formal debut in **X-MEN #30**, where the ceremonies take place and another Marvel heroine makes wedding history in a world-class dress.

– Lisa Patrick

"Dearly beloved. . ."

". . . we are gathered here today to get through this thing."

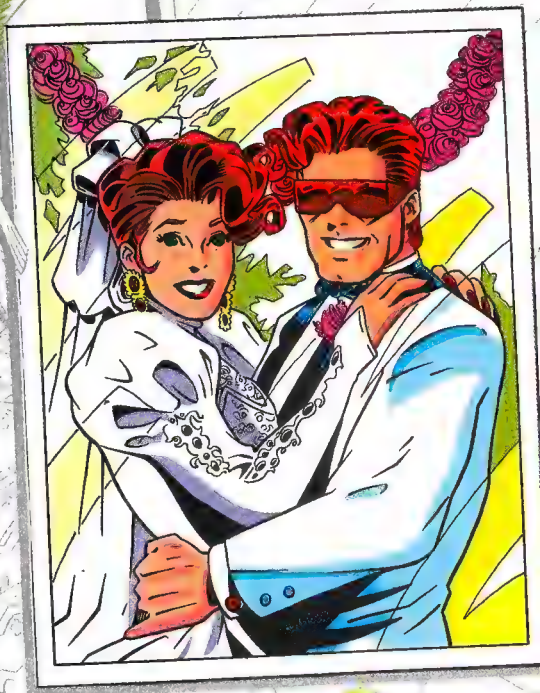
Although lacking in romance, this truncated *Purple Rain* lyrical pearl could easily represent the X-Men's attitude toward the upcoming Scott Summers-Jean Grey nuptials, after thirty years of hardship, heartache, and the "star-crossed lovers" bit.

But the X-Men are, in a very real sense, a family, loved by one another and by countless numbers of fans. And families don't think that way. When there's cause to celebrate, they do it right.

Rest assured, X-Men Group Editor Bob Harras promised — the wedding "special" will be just that.

Witnessed by writer Fabian Nicieza, penciler Andy Kubert, and inker Matt Ryan, the blessed event takes place in January's **X-MEN #30**, a standard-format issue which follows on the heels of wedding preamble stories in **THE UNCANNY X-MEN #310** and **EXCALIBUR #75**. Among the signatures to be found in the guest book will be those of most of the current mutant heroes, Sean Cassidy and Moira McTaggert, Lila Cheney (and band), and Jean's former roommates Misty Knight and Colleen Wing.

This long-awaited milestone will be joined on comic racks by **X-MEN: THE WEDDING ALBUM**, a 32-page glossy magazine printed in the same format as last summer's **X-MEN ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE**, and edited by Suzanne Gaffney (**THE X-MEN SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE MANSION**). The book will feature a wraparound cover by **SURVIVAL GUIDE** artist Richard Bennett, intimate entries from Jean's diary, the previously unpublished story of Jean's efforts to help recruit Scott for the original X-Men, and conceptual sketches of Jean's gown, whose design comes to Marvel from fashion world empress Nicole Miller. (See related story in this issue.)



JITTERS

The entire to-do kicked off with Jean's Thanksgiving Day proposal to Scott in **UNCANNY #308**, the first chapter in writer Scott Lobdell's unique "thematic trilogy" of pieces allowing readers to be privy to the pre-ceremony ruminations (jitters?). First it was Jean (**#308**), then Professor Xavier (**#309**), and finally Cyclops's turn to let the faithful know what's on his mind in issue **#310**'s bachelor party, in which Lobdell and penciler M.C. Wyman muscle into male-bonding territory and reveal just what sort of things Cyke and Cable would discuss over beers and a game of pool. And, Lobdell added, "The party is going to be held at a bar in New York called *No Idea*" (formal attire optional; ruby quartz glasses required).

The X-Women, meanwhile, will spend **EXCALIBUR #75** helping Jean bid farewell to her single days at Manhattan's *Planet Hollywood*, compliments of writer Richard Ashford, penciler Ken Lashley, and inkers Cam Smith and Randy Elliott. "I'm polling everybody I know to find the funniest thing that happened to them at a bachelorette party, and I'm going to try to incorporate that," Ashford said.

And both the bachelor and bachelorette outings will set the tone for the wedding issue itself. Despite the X-Men's history of cataclysm upon cataclysm, for once, hitches and disruptions — if there are any — will most definitely *not* be world-threatening. If you think you'll see Magneto rise from his sickbed and fling the chapel doors open just as the minister melodramatically enjoins, "Let

him speak now, or forever hold his peace," think again.

As Bob Harras and his writers are planning the occasion, mutant abilities and other super powers will be left to idle, to be used only as gifts showered on the newlyweds. Look for Storm to grace the wintery X-mansion grounds with a summer bloom during the ceremony, while Bobby Drake contributes some truly dazzling ice sculptures.

"This isn't the wedding of Reed and Sue or Hank and Jan, who are all public heroes," Nicieza said. "This is a private ceremony. I imagine other Marvel Universe characters will be invited to the wedding, but only if they come in their civilian identities. It's going to be a suit-and-tie affair, *not* a spandex affair.

"What I hope to do is show the wedding day from start to finish, and having just gotten married myself in September of '92, I have it very vividly in my memory," he continued. "For all the crap the mutants go through, they're going to have a wedding day that's as normal as can be — as normal as any wedding day can be, anyway."

"That's what we're going to try to concentrate on in this story," Harras agreed. "Rather than having a villain show up and go, 'A-ha, I've got you now,' it's going to be how the characters react to this wedding. They're all going to see this as a relationship that's *working* despite it all, and it's going to make them think about their own lives. That's the spin I want to put on it."

The group stands to be reflecting for quite some time, given Scott and Jean's long and arduous road to the altar. Over the last three decades they've weathered everything from Scott's self-doubting shyness to Jean's "death" and subsequent reappearance (*after* Scott had already married her clone, Madelyne Pryor). Later developments saw Jean turn down Scott 's first marriage proposal (in the pages of **X-FACTOR**) for fear of giving birth to a nighmarish future timeline, and still more recently Scott found himself caught up in a brief but intense flirtation with Psylocke.

It hasn't been easy.

Within the storyline itself, motivations for this new direction were easy to come by, no matter how great the couple's misgivings might be. "Scott and Jean probably haven't ever had as hard a two-year period as they've just had," Nicieza said. "'The X-cutioner's Song,' combined with the Legacy Virus, on top of the return of Magneto. . .I think all of these things have done more to *make* them rather than *break* them. And because they've seen they can't be broken, even during the worst of times, there's more hope than ever for the best of times."

"With Peter's defection [to the Acolytes] and Logan's wounds and Professor X opening the doors of the mansion to Sabretooth, Jean [has] realized there are no constants in life," Lobdell added. "There's nothing to depend upon, for sure, with the exception of her love for Scott and his love for her."

Ironically, the behind-the-scenes development that sealed the deal for good originated outside the Marvel editorial offices. Last summer, while attending a Fox network story conference in Los Angeles to help map out this season's X-Men animated adventures, Harras discovered a movement afoot to have Scott and Jean's television incarnations marry. Harras successfully lobbied to delay those plans (a bogus wedding masterminded by Mr. Sinister aired instead), but he used Fox's proposal to get Marvel Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco's blessing for a wedding issue. "I'd been trying to get them married for a couple of years, and after that, Tom relented," Harras said with a laugh.

Marvel's Bossman can hardly be faulted for wanting to give the matter careful thought. Although Scott and Jean's walk down the aisle is sure to be a particularly joyful chapter in the annals of Marvel history, it is just as sure to bring lasting change to the X-Men fold.

And how exactly will that change play out?

Nicieza described Rachel as being "both thrilled and terrified" to see the marriage — and potentially her family — becoming reality, given that the event could lead to the Sentinel-ruled future from which she escaped. As Ashford mused, "If you really boil it down, is Rachel Jean's daughter, or just a Jean's daughter?"

Then there's Lobdell's suggestion that the Blue and Gold strike teams may be headed for some permanent reconfigurations in the interest of keeping the newlyweds side-by-side. Will this force Beast into a leadership role which, as Nicieza noted, he's uncomfortable tackling?

The most concrete post-wedding plans call for Professor Xavier to tend to his complex-but-neglected personal life. He has long pushed to

"It's going to be a suit and tie affair, not a

A LIFE OF ITS OWN

Over the last few months, Harras noted, the relationship seemed to be developing on its own, leading the writers in a predestined direction. "It seemed forced to keep them apart, frankly," he conceded. " And we thought, 'The first thirty years are over — let's start with a change.' "

the extreme the concept of "long-distance relationship" in the form of his romance with Lilandra, ruler of the distant Shi'ar Empire. Lobdell delivered the impetus for Xavier to take action in **UNCANNY #309**, playing up the idea that the Professor has "pretty much sacrificed everything in his life for his X-Men, and now his two oldest children are forging a life of their own, which is something he's denied himself for years and years. There's a lot of underlying resentment on Charles's part." Lobdell warned that readers should look for Amelia Voght, a woman from Xavier's past (introduced in **UNCANNY #300**) to further complicate his increasingly *dis*ordered existence.

DEFINE "HAPPILY"...

Through all the trial and tribulation, the X-Men creative editors and writers vowed, Scott and Jean *will* live happily ever after — at least to the extent the vagaries of the Marvel Universe will allow.

Translated: Soon after leaving for their honeymoon, the new Mr. and Mrs. Summers will be yanked *bodily* into the future for a Lobdell-scripted limited series featuring a prepubescent Cable. Due in March, April, and May, the series will span twelve years and, in the process, shed new light on Scott's relationship with Nathan. This three-part eye-opener will be written by Scott Lobdell and penciled by Gene Ha.

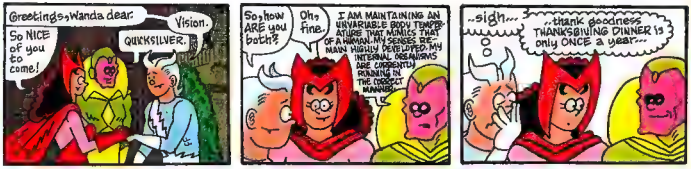
In *present* time and continuity, Scott and Jean will only be gone for a moment, and upon their return they'll be forced to deal with the world of here and now, despite what they've learned from their time-spanning adventure. Still, Harras said, at the end of the day, Scott Summers and Jean Grey may always maintain the hope that the mutant crisis will end, but they'll recognize the reality that it will be a long, hard road, with no guarantee of success.

"They're getting married more *in spite of* the situation than because the situation is resolving. It's a try for normalcy in desperate times. And why shouldn't they have that?"

HEM BEC K

THERE'S MUCH MERRIMENT AS THE IMPENDING NUPTIALS OF SCOTT SUMMERS AND JEAN GREY--aka CYCLOPS AND MARVEL GIRL OF THE X-MEN--DRAW NEAR, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE EARLIER TWO WEDDINGS OF MAGNETO'S MUTANT OFFSPRING, WANDA AND PIETRO? (YOU KNOW 'EM AS THE SCARLET WITCH AND THE SUPER SPEEDSTER, QUICKSILVER).

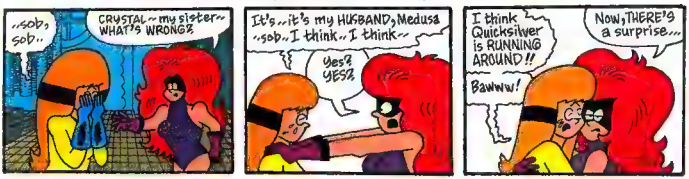
WANDA WAS FIRST TO THE ALTAR, MARRYING HER FELLOW AVENGER--AND SYNTHZOID--THE VISION. HOWEVER, HER HIGHLY EMOTIONAL SIBLING HAD DIFFICULTY WARMING UP TO HIS MECHANICAL BROTHER-IN-LAW...


Greetings, Wanda dear.
Vision.
So NICE of you to come!
QUICKSILVER.
So, how ARE you both?
Oh, fine.
I AM MAINTAINING AN UNVARIABLE BODY TEMPERATURE THAT MIMICS THAT OF A HUMAN. MY SENSES REMAIN HIGHLY DEVELOPED. MY INTERNAL ORGANISMS ARE CURRENTLY RUNNING IN THE CORRECT MANNER.
..sigh...
..thank goodness THANKSGIVING DINNER is only ONCE a year...

NOT LONG AFTERWARDS, PIETRO FOUND HIMSELF EXCHANGING VOWS WITH CRYSTAL OF THE INHUMANS ROYAL FAMILY, IN A CEREMONY THAT ALMOST TURNED TO DISASTER WHEN HER LESS THAN THRILLED RELATIVES HEARD THE FOLLOWING INVOCATION...

..and should ANYONE know WHY these two should NOT be joined in holy matrimony, SPEAK NOW or FOREVER hold your peace...
Now, now, BLACK BOLT, let's give the kids a CHANCE--not to mention the REST of us!..

BUT BEFORE LONG, THINGS BEGAN TO SOUR BETWEEN THE MUTANT AND THE INHUMAN. SUSPICIONS, THOUGH GROUNDLESS, FESTERED...



YEARS LATER, AFTER THAT UNION HAD DISSOLVED, CRYSTAL TRIED TO PUT ON A STRONG FRONT WHEN SHE HEARD THE NEWS OF THE MARRIAGE OF HER FIRST TRUE LOVE, JOHNNY STORM, TO THE WOMAN HE THOUGHT WAS ALICIA MASTERS (BUT THAT'S A WHOLE 'NOTHER STORY!)...

Let us CONSOLE you, little one.
Yes, we know how IMPORTANT the boy once was to you.
Johnny Storm? HUH! I got over HIM a LONG, LONG time ago. In fact, THESE days, all the HUMAN TORCH is to me--
..is an OLD FLAME!
HEH.

MAZEL TOV, Scott & Jean, AND BETTER LUCK!

Stan's SOAP BOX

Hi, Heroes!

I'm not gonna claim that things are confused in the maniacal Marvel bullpen, but — as I sit here, merrily tapping away at my computer's capricious little keys, I haven't the slightest idea when this issue of Marvel Age will go on sale! It'll probably be sometime during the holiday season — either around Thanksgiving or Christmas or perhaps after New Year's. So, in an effort to play safe and not miss a single opportunity, I wish you the most thankful of Thanksgiving, the merriest of Christmases and the happiest of New Years! (Of course, if Sly Steve Saffel, our efficacious editor, decides to run this piece in July, then all bets are off!)

Okay, with that monumental bit of minutia out of the way, we can now turn our attention to the burning question, "Should comic book characters grow older, marry and even eventually raise families?"

In case you're expecting some long-winded answer loaded with psychological jargon, forget it. My only response is, "Why not?"

In each and every story we try to make our lively little luminaries as realistic as possible. We do our utmost to breathe life into them, to present them as interesting, relevant, three-dimensional characters. We've always felt that one of the main reasons for Marvel's laudable long-term success is the fact that our heroes and villains have great credibility — you believe in them, you care about them; just like characters in a soap opera — once you get to know them, you become involved in their lives and can't wait to see what'll happen next.

That's why I think it's a great idea for Cyclops and Jean to marry. With all we know about them, it's a safe bet that they'd take the plunge in real life, so why not on the pages of their mag? It can only serve to liven things up and give us countless opportunities for new and different plot twists as comicdom's most popular series continues along its record-breaking ascent into the record books.

Hey, I can still remember announcing, years ago, that it was time for Reed Richards and Sue Storm to become man and wife. You wouldn't believe how many so-called experts told me that such a comic book wedding would be the kiss of death, that it would destroy the magazine because no dyed-in-the-wool comic book fans would read adventure stories involving married couples!

Of course, major changes in the lives of comic book characters must be made judiciously, carefully and of course infrequently. Readers are mighty sharp. The minute fandom suspects that someone's getting married, or having a baby, or being killed off in an effort to simply goose up the sales of the comic, forget it! Any watershed change in a hero's life must be a natural, logical, understandable event. And, if done properly, it can only make a series even more compelling than before.

Since this is one of the most widely read columns in comics, I can just see editors everywhere suddenly tossing down their copy of **MARVEL AGE** and racing to their phone or fax machine in order to contact their writing staff and frantically ordering them to have their characters start marrying, divorcing, growing bald, changing jobs, aging, giving birth, getting killed or whatever — just so long as they undergo major changes!

But remember, I said, "If done *properly* it can make a series more compelling than before." But don't hold your breath waiting for our next Soapbox to explain *how* to do it properly. That's the tough part, and as long as the competition keeps reading our mags, we ain't talkin'!

But we don't mind sharing *this* soupson of sagacity with the world at large — "Natura non facit saltum!"

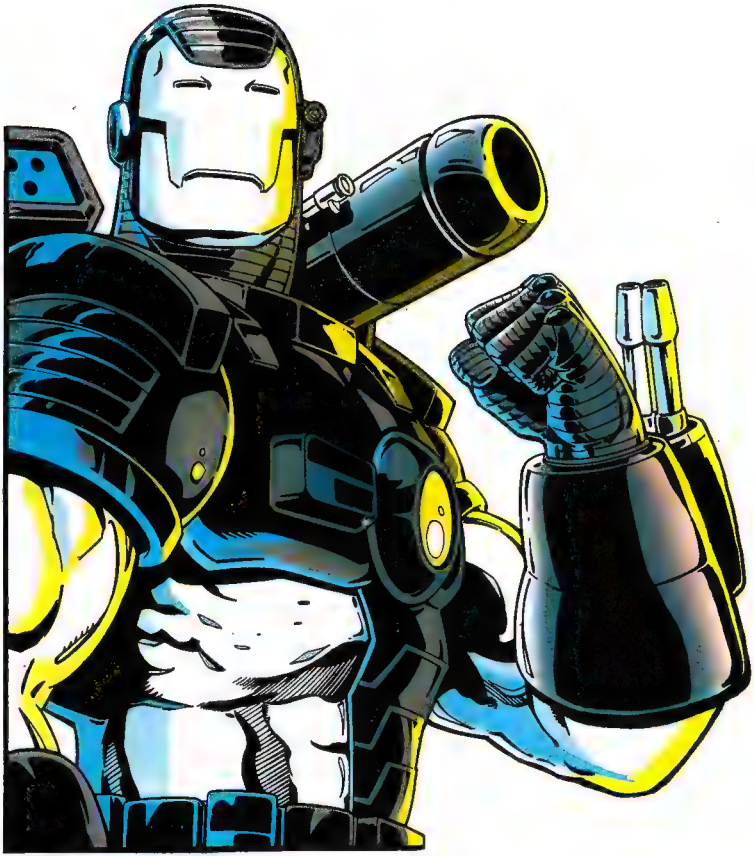
Excelsior!

Stan Lee

WE DID IT! WE'VE BYPASSED THE FLAME!
BUT, REED... WHAT ABOUT JOHNNY? WHAT CAN HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?
LET'S... TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT THAT-- FOR NOW!

WAR MACHINE

CALLED AN IRON MAN OF A



DOESN'T LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT COLOR

In a different reality, **IRON MAN** writer Len Kaminski had Tony Stark will a new blue and gold design of the basic **IRON MAN** suit to his old friend Jim Rhodes. Rhodes wore the armor while Stark was presumed dead, then returned it, and the new monthly **IRON MAN** "spin-off" title, **WAR MACHINE** did *not* ship in February 1994. The first double-sized issue did *not* guest-star Cable, Deathlok, and Nick Fury. In fact, it was *never* even conceived.

This scenario could have happened, had not Editor Nel Yomtov noticed a flurry of fan mail bubbling with praise for the black-and-silver armor Stark donned to fight the Masters of Silence in **IRON MAN #281.** What made the suit unique from any Stark had worn before was that this one featured a mini-arsenal of heavy military weaponry and an exterior coat of diamond-hard synthetic polycarbon rendering it indestructible.

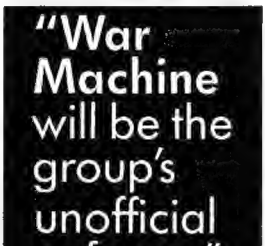
Kaminski thought of it as just "another in the long line of specialty armors Stark had built for various situations," but it was apparent that fans wanted to see more of the suit. Yomtov suggested that this might be the perfect opportunity. "I was skeptical at first because I was afraid we'd be overplaying the 'big guns' motif until people were sick of it," Kaminski admitted. "Obviously I couldn't possibly have been more wrong. You hear that, Nel? **YOU WERE RIGHT AND I WAS WRONG! THIS IS MY PUBLIC CONFESSION."**

In fact, the armor's second appearance met with even heavier fan support, so strong that when Stark's death turned out to be a con job, Yomtov decided to let Rhodey keep the suit. Rhodey joined the Avengers West Coast and Yomtov approached Tom DeFalco with the idea for a **WAR MACHINE** limited series. DeFalco declined.

Given the overwhelming fan response, he ordered Yomtov to launch a full-scale monthly title.

And so, the first double-sized action-packed issue of **WAR MACHINE** *will* ship February 1994, written by Len Kaminski and newcomer Scott Benson, penciled by Gabriel Gecko, and inked by Pam Eklund. Along with **AVENGERS WEST COAST** successor **FORCE WORKS, WAR MACHINE** will round off a three-title **IRON MAN** family, all edited by Yomtov.

To recap: for years, Jim Rhodes has been Tony Stark's best friend and trusted colleague in Stark's billion-dollar corporation, Stark Enterprises. Everything changed when Stark apparently died and left Rhodey the company and his suit of battle armor. Stark returned, and Rhodey was angry, to say the least, at being deceived. He and Stark still aren't talking, in one of the biggest feuds in Marvel history. When Rhodey learned that Stark will be the mastermind behind **FORCE WORKS,** he walked out of **AVENGERS WEST COAST #102** in disgust, and into his own title.



Rhodey will keep his Los Angeles home base — "he likes the weather there," Benson offered, but with **WAR MACHINE #4** he will take on a pivotal role with a new organization — World Watch. According to Benson, World Watch is "a cross between Amnesty International, CARE, and the Impossible Missions Force. "World Watch is our idealized version of something that ought to exist. It has ties to official legal, political, and diplomatic resources, and independent economic support, but if the system keeps World Watch from getting things done, it has no qualms about doing an end-run around the law. Its members — our supporting cast — are former politicians, lawyers, espionage professionals, scientists and technicians who tried to improve the system and got nowhere. War Machine will be the group's unofficial enforcer, taking action when standard methods fail."

As Kaminski added, he was tired of organizations such as **SHIELD** and the Justice League that merely work to preserve the status quo. "I thought it was time we had a world-wide organization committed to making things better and which was willing to kick some butt in the process." As described by the writers, the first four-issue storyline — featuring Cable, Deathlok, and **SHIELD** and a "really nasty situation in North Africa" — gives War Machine a chance to kick some major butt against what Kaminski described as "some nasty bad guys."

"About the only thing [Cable, Deathlok, and **SHIELD**] agree on is that they shouldn't be messing around in another country's business," Benson said. "War Machine will be looking at all the human misery being generated and wondering, 'Why not?' I'm really tired of the cliché of 'A Bunch of Super Hero Pals Banding Together to Rid the World of Evil'; I wanted to see a situation where none of these guys agrees with anyone else in a mess that can't be resolved so easily."

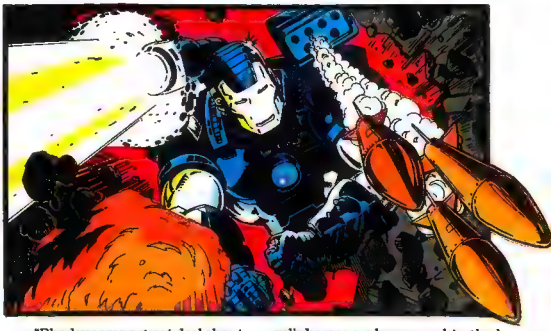
"And there's lots of **SHOOTING!**" added Kaminski. "And things ***BLOWING UP.*** We figured if we're going to call him **WAR MACHINE,** let's dump him in the middle of an honest-to-God *war.*"

Similar to the situation in the true-life troubled Eastern Europe, the

writers planned a scenario where various members of the international community argue different solutions. According to Kaminski, the main point for Rhodey is "Make it stop! That's what War Machine is about — he's the guy who goes in and does something while the diplomats are still arguing among themselves."

Will the armor's inventor Tony Stark approve of everything Rhodey does with the suit? Will Rhodey be anxious to shake hands with Tony and forgive his former best friend for deceiving him? As Kaminski put it: "He's let this guy jerk him around one time too many as it is, and he's not about to give him another shot at it." Both writers promised an explosive **IRON MAN/WAR MACHINE** crossover within the first year that will "settle the Tony Stark/Jim Rhodes relationship issue once and for all."

All of which underlines the fact that, as writers and editor stressed, **WAR MACHINE** should not be thought of as just another **IRON MAN** clone. Not only is War Machine's armor different from Iron Man's, in capabilities as well as color, so is Jim Rhodes' personality and his conception of what a super hero should aspire to. "I don't think that Tony is all that comfortable with people — including himself — so he tends to deal with the Big Picture rather than with individual issues or feelings," Kaminski suggested. "He'll do what's necessary to achieve larger goals, but he doesn't often stop to worry about what effects his actions might have on the people around him.

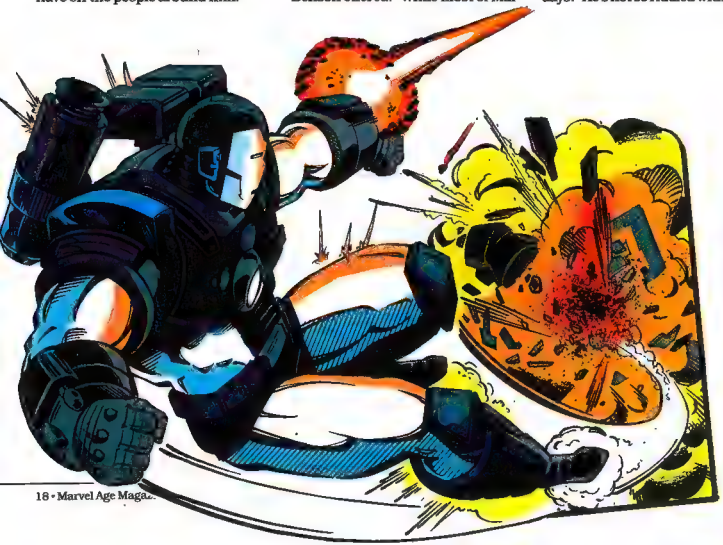


"Rhodey cares a great deal about people, hurts when they hurt, and is not content to be a bystander. He's also very pragmatic in his approach to problems; he tends to do what works, rather than behave according to an abstract ideal. As far as 'appropriate behavior' for a super hero is concerned, Rhodey doesn't make the distinction: having an armored suit doesn't excuse you from basic human responsibilities. For instance, I think Rhodey would say The Punisher should be kept in a cage until he rots."

"Rhodey has a hard time with the average 'super hero' mentality," Benson offered. "While most of Marvel's heroes are busy punching bad guys, the world around them continues to get worse and worse for all those unlucky folks who can't fly or bend steel in their bare hands and who struggle every day just to survive to the next one. War Machine couldn't care less about the problems of the Shi'ar or who's got the Infinity Gauntlet. He *does* care how many people got killed in Sarajevo in the last ten minutes."

All of which comes down to the qualities Benson said he finds most appealing about Rhodey's character — he doesn't fit into "the three basic templates for super heroes these days: "He's not so riddled with doubts

"THIS IS MY PUBLIC



and insecurities that he can't see straight. He's not a stiff-backed, rock-jawed Ken doll; and he's not a violent, teeth-gritting hard-case. He's a reasonable, intelligent man with a strong sense of who and what he is, a healthy conscience, an equally healthy self-image, a moral center, and a sense of humor."

Kaminski added, "He's smart but he's no Tony Stark. He's tough; he's brave; but he's no Captain America. He's not so full of himself that he doesn't have doubts, but he's not horribly neurotic like, say, Spider-Man. He makes mistakes, kicks himself for them and then moves on, a little wiser. He's an honest, decent guy who's been given a chance to do something about what's wrong in the world."

Kaminski noted one bit of irony concerning War Machine's origins — if Rhodey's opportunity to be a super hero came about as a matter of chance, so did his character name. In the text of **IRON MAN #281**, Kaminski originally called the suit "Heavy Combat Armor," and "War

CONFESSION"

Machine" was meant to be the story title. In an effort to create a striking cover, Yomtov decided to spray paint the title in red across the **IRON MAN** logo, and when mail began to flood in, the fans all referred to the armor simply as the "War Machine." "It just stuck," recalled Kaminski. "Part of it, I think, is the color scheme. I've heard lots of fans say that they find it easier to see black and silver as metal than the traditional red and gold. It's also more overtly threatening and ominous. . ."

WAR MACHINE Co-writer Scott Benson interpreted the suit's popularity as rising from the fact that its physical look makes such a break from the past. "The black and silver suit with all those guns updated him for current tastes. It was a major change from every 'look' of the [Iron Man] in the last 30 years, so it got people's attention in a big way."

Which is, of course, what the writers hope for **WAR MACHINE**, the series — to get people's attentions in a major way. Or as Kaminski put it: "The whole thing just took on a life of its own. At this point, it's **COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL.**"

– Anya Martin

PROPOSING A SPIN-OFF: WAR MACHINE

The first task in launching any new Marvel monthly title is the written proposal. When it's a spin-off title involving a familiar character, the process may seem more straight-forward, but it still offers its own challenges. According to **WAR MACHINE** Editor Nel Yomtov, he went through the following basic steps:

1. Selecting the writer or writing team.

In this case, Yomtov said it just seemed natural to start with **IRON MAN** writer Len Kaminski, the creator of the **WAR MACHINE** armor and the person most familiar with Jim Rhodes' character. "I guess every editor has their own mode of operating, but mine is to at least give the guy who got us on the map a first shot," said Yomtov. "Because Len had already done such a nice job on the character of Jim Rhodes, it just wouldn't have made sense to ask someone else. But if he hadn't gotten it right after one attempt and a re-write, I would have felt justified in saying we've tried our best with him, let's go to someone else."

Kaminski suggested Scott Benson as his writing partner, since the two had already pitched the idea of a Rhodey limited series to Yomtov.

2. The Proposal itself.

Yomtov explained that the main difference between a proposal for a spin-off series and one for a series starring a completely new character is less need for background. "If I had said, 'give me a proposal for a new character who had magic powers but wasn't too close to Doctor Strange,' then I would expect a full back story about the character and his environment," he explained. "While you still have to develop a new set of characters and a new rationale for your characters to spin-off into, you've got this whole other world to go back to that you don't have to create, and is pre-sold to your audience. Thus, I wouldn't ask the writer to give me a rationale on Rhodey because I already know him, and we're doing the series because everyone is familiar with his character."

What Yomtov *did* request was clearly delineated justification for the series. It needed to tie into the old book's history and current plot line, but also establish its own unique identity and not become just an **IRON MAN** clone. "Suggest some new and interesting characters," Yomtov instructed. "You might also want to use some old and familiar characters. See what you come up with based on where you've gone with the character before and make it a smooth transition."

3. The first plot.

Back story that is not required in a proposal, however, becomes integral to the structure of the first issue, Yomtov added. When Kaminski and Benson turned in their first plot, he requested a rewrite because they had plotted the story as if all **WAR MACHINE** readers were familiar with Rhodey's history.

"Len was forgetting this is an origin story for thousands of fans who haven't seen War Machine before," he stated. "Marvel's philosophy is that every time someone picks up a comic book, regardless of what the title is, it's the *first time* for someone. There will be a lot of old **IRON MAN** readers reading **WAR MACHINE**, but there'll also be a lot. . .of new comic book readers. We've been dealing with Rhodey for many years and War Machine for a little over a year, but that first issue has to tell everyone who he is, his background, how he came to have the suit of armor, to whom his foremost relationship is, in this case, to Tony Stark. I didn't need that for my proposal, but a good first issue establishes the entire universe — or most of it — with the promise of a lot more exciting stuff to come."

– Anya Martin

SPAWN OF THE COSMIC POWERS

In January, a six-issue, double-sized limited series dubbed **COSMIC POWERS** debuts featuring a rogues gallery of galactic heroes and, especially, villains in a saga that puts Thanos back in the role of supreme manipulator, and gathers the protagonists to search for an object of incredible power — just the kind of prize the mad Titan lives to possess.

It is an epic adventure that has been crafted and has been mined from the same vein as the **INFINITY GAUNTLET** trilogy, and **SILVER SURFER** scripter Ron Marz is fired up at the opportunity to delve into the lives of the Surfer's cast of characters. "The Surfer won't appear all that much," Marz stated. "We felt that the story involved all these supporting characters and he didn't really have much of a place in it, because once you throw him into the mix the story changes because he's so powerful." Editor Craig Anderson agreed, "We wanted to spotlight the villains and the other characters; tell the story from *their* perspective."

Marz was quick to point out that while each issue concentrates on a particular character, there is a unified theme to the six-issue run which tells a complete story. The galaxy-spanning storyline revolves around — in order of appearance: Thanos, Terrax, Jack of Hearts and Ganymede, Legacy, Morg, and Tyrant. As each issue will showcase a different cast member, the book's title will be altered to add that character's name to the title; hence the full title of the first issue is **COSMIC POWERS STARRING** Thanos, for example.

While Thanos is probably the best-known character of the bunch, many will recognize some of the others. Jack of Hearts not only had his own short-lived color comic, he had a recurring role in some of Marvel's black and white magazines during the '70s and was a regular in **IRON MAN** for a time. Ganymede was introduced in the **SURFER** about a year ago, and has since been paired off with Jack. Terrax is, of course, familiar to fans of **THE AVENGERS** and **THE FANTASTIC FOUR**, having been a herald of Galactus. Legacy, introduced in this year's **SILVER SURFER ANNUAL**, is the son of Mar-Vell (the Kree **CAPTAIN MARVEL**). Morg and Tyrant are the newest additions to the Surfer's cast — a pair of villains who have been running around in the **SURFER** for the past year.

At the core is the conflict between the arrogant schemer Thanos and the god-like Tyrant, with whom Galactus has been at odds for some time, and the other featured characters get swept up in the ever-widening conflagration. According to Anderson, each issue is three-quarters a solo story about the featured character, and one-quarter the adventure in which they are caught up. "This way each character has a chance to be on their own before becoming involved with the story," Anderson said.

"The playground

As readers of **WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH** know, Thanos has been greatly de-powered since the conclusion of the **INFINITY GAUNTLET** saga, and has been associating with Adam Warlock and other related heroes. "Even though I think that Thanos is *more* than a cut-and-dried villain at this point," Marz stated, "he's not one of the good guys, either. So a lot of this series deals with Thanos trying to regain his menacing edge, which has been dulled somewhat because he has been hanging with these heroes." Likening him to other "noble" Marvel villains like Dr. Doom and Magneto, Marz explained that Thanos is really very unique in his villainy. "In this instance he is a manipulator. He's the kind of guy to set all these things in motion for his own purposes, and everybody along the way is really going to be screwed so he can get what he wants."

It was determined that the story was too grand to be told within the confines of a regular-sized comic, so each issue was expanded to 48 pages. Needless to say, the demands of producing more than 200 pages of art in six months would be taxing even for the fastest artist; hence it was determined early-on that each issue would be drawn by a different art team. "It will give me a chance to work with different guys that I haven't worked with previously, but really enjoy," Marz stated. They include: Ron Lim (**THE INFINITY CRUSADE**) and Jimmy Palmiotti on THANOS; Jeffrey Moore (**GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**) and Keith Williams on **TERRAX**; Andy Smith (**QUASAR**) and Bill Anderson on **JACK OF HEARTS AND GANYMEDE**; Lim and Bob Almond (**WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH**) on **LEGACY**; Tom Grindberg (now the regular **THOR** penciler) and Almond on **MORG**; wrapping up with Angel Medina (**WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH**) and Bill Anderson on the final issue — **TYRANT**.

Marz said he tends to approach each story he writes by tailoring it to the strengths of the particular artist. For example, there will be loads of high-tech hardware in the Angel Medina issue. "I try to give everybody what they enjoy drawing so the product comes out better. It's no fun for me to stick some guy with a story that he doesn't enjoy, which is hopefully one of the reasons that guys want to come back and work with me." Marz has written his script to allow his artists to take a truly majestic approach, and the higher page count will allow the artists the luxury of employing a number of two-page spreads to enhance the infinite scope.

Marz credits Anderson as the catalyst for the series. "We had been speaking, in general terms, about what kind of bit we could do off the Surfer, because it seems to be one of Marvel's more popular books in terms of sales and recognition," Marz said, noting that it was Anderson who pursued the idea until it gelled.

"Craig has these covers planned so that they should be really nifty," Marz continued. "They have a bordering device that looks like marbleized paper. All of the covers will be similar in that they will be fairly tight shots of the main character of that story." And in an effort to focus more attention on the story itself, "it's a regular, double-sized issue, with no cover enhancements, selling for $2.50," Anderson stated. Then he laughed and commented that it's a new gimmick they came up with, shipping a series with no gimmick.

Ron Marz

is a little different, but the toys are the same."

Both Marz and Anderson acknowledged that if reader response warranted it, any of the characters could be spun off into his or her own title. In this fashion, Surfer and Warlock fans who enjoy adventures with a cosmic scope would have other characters to whom they could turn. "I'd like to see Jack of Hearts and Ganymede get a series because they're such an interesting couple," Anderson commented.

When asked if it was difficult writing on such a grand scale, Marz responded by saying that, to him, it was the characters themselves that made for a good story. "The playground is a little different, but the toys are the same."

– Robert Sodaro

Hot Sheet

December: a time to reflect on the year that was, and on the year that's about to be. And the "Hot Sheet" specializes in looking at what's around the corner. This month, the focus is on Spider-Man and what's in store for everybody's favorite wall-crawler. Plus, "Hot Sheet" goes cosmic with some of the Silver Surfer's best allies and malevolent foes, and on a quest to the stars with the mysterious Darkhawk. All this, and a quick look at what'll be hot in '94!

SIMPLY AMAZING

The last year was a huge one for Spider-Man: Peter Parker's supposedly-dead parents showed up on his doorstep, Harry Osborn/Green Goblin passed on, and Venom and Carnage waged war on each other throughout New York City! With so much water passing under the bridge in 1993, what more could Spidey fans ask for?

Group Editor Danny Fingeroth assured readers that the titles he oversees will get even more intense: "Be looking for big things to happen in the life of Peter Parker, both in and out of costume," Danny stated. "There are some major events on the horizon. . ."

In **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** (now written by **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN** alumnus J.M. DeMatteis), for example, Danny promises a resolution to the Peter's parents sub-plot. "I don't want to give away the ending," Danny teased, "but I can tell you that, whatever the truth behind this mystery may be, the repercussions and revelations of this story will affect the future of Spider-Man's and Peter's life for years to come." The revelations come during the "LifeTheft" storyline that will start in **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #386** (on sale this month). During this three-part story, the Vulture returns once more and attempts to rejuvenate his aging body by stealing the life force of Spider-Man, "who temporarily becomes old as a result. But by the double-sized, cover-enhanced **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #388**, the major event will rock Spidey's life, lead into a four-part crossover in all the monthly Spider-books, and launch a major storyline leading to **AMAZING #400**."

WEAVING A TANGLED WEB

Over in **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN** Editor Eric Fein also plans to put Peter Parker and his alter-ego through the wringer. "At the beginning of 1994, starting with **WEB #110** (on sale in January), we'll be doing a story aimed at changing the life of the Lizard forever. Unfortunately for Spider-Man, he'll find himself stuck in between the Lizard and Warrant, an ultra-cool bounty hunter determined to take the Lizard down for good," Eric revealed.

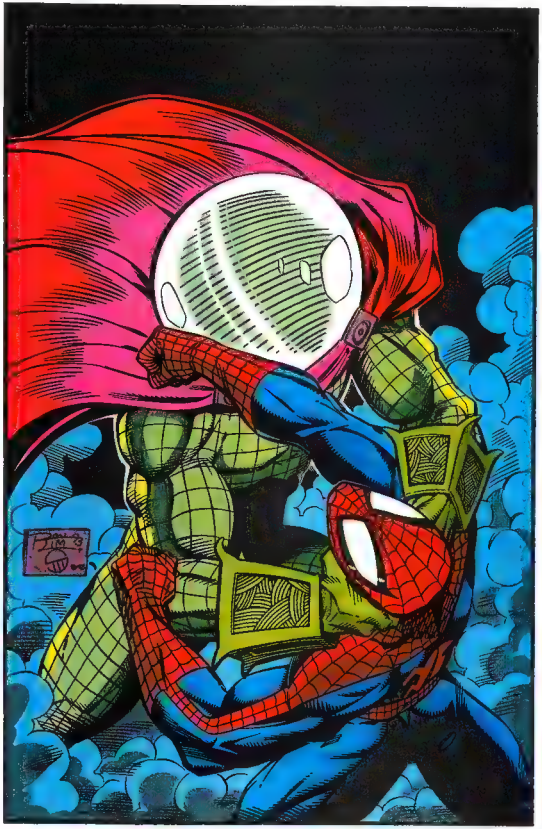
After this storyline, **WEB** plans to take an issue (#112) to tie-in with the cataclysmic happenings in all the other Spider-Man titles.

Finally, the first quarter of the new year will end for **WEB** with Spider-Man finding himself teamed up with his former flame and sometimes partner in crimefighting, The Black Cat. This one-issue story will guest-star Gambit of **THE X-MEN**, so readers can expect the sparks to fly, cajun-style!

SPECTACULAR EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

Over in **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN**, writer Steven (**PUNISHER**) Grant is faced with the task of juggling the lives of Peter Parker's many friends and associates. "**SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN** will remain a character-oriented book," Editor Mark Powers observed, "and Steve has chosen some interesting characters to focus his talents on.

"Over the next year we plan to take a look at the life of nearly everyone Peter is involved with. The major event is **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #211**, its part in the crossover,



Then there will be some very interesting developments in Flash Thompson's life following his battering at the hands of Tombstone. Flash and Peter were never best friends in the strict sense of the word, but the two will come to a new understanding of each other, and develop a deeper sense of friendship while Flash is laid up." Mark elaborated. "Another character-driven sub-plot will involve J. Jonah Jameson as he tries to navigate through some surprisingly rough waters in his life as publisher of *The Daily Bugle*."

While all of this is happening to Peter Parker outside the mask, life *inside* the tights will become even more difficult beginning in **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #209** (on sale now) as the super-assassin called The Foreigner undergoes a personality overhaul. "Foreigner will become a more threatening villain during this storyline," Mark revealed. "Instead of being in the shadows so much, he'll be a much more action-oriented character. We're going to show him as an assassin with the martial skills of Bullseye [and] with a devious mind to match."

UNLIMITED AND WITHOUT ADJECTIVES

Beginning with issue #44 (January), the adjectiveless **SPIDER-MAN** will get a new creative team and begin to tie itself more closely to the other Spider-Man titles. In #45, the month-long crossover of the Spider-titles begins in this magazine. Writer Howard (**GHOST RIDER**) Mackie teams with penciller Tom (**VENOM**) Lyle to bring the book "to new heights of greatness," Fingeroth explained. Then, in #46, a storyline begins that picks up certain threads left in the aftermath of "Maximum Carnage" when they bring the demented Hobgoblin and the deformed Demogoblin back into the spotlight. Then **SPIDER-MAN** will turn its attention to the re-creation of a familiar villain — with a new twist — as they introduce the all-new *Kraven The Hunter* in issue #50.

SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED focuses attention on special events. For example:. "In **UNLIMITED #4** (on sale in January) it finally happens," Editor Fingeroth stated dramatically. "That's right, Spider-Man's identity is revealed to the world. But, readers will ask, where's Peter Parker when this happens?" Issue #5 of **UNLIMITED** will feature a long-awaited meeting between Spider-Man and The Human Torch, both in the middle of major personal crises. Tom DeFalco and Ron Lim will be telling this "titanic tale," Fingeroth elaborated.

THE WORD FOR 1994 IS "CHANGE"

Regardless of the Spider title, over the next year the theme of the book will be change. "Peter's life as himself and as Spider-Man will begin to overlap even more," Danny noted, "and Mary Jane is not in for a smooth time. There'll be an impact on their lives as a result of her smoking, Mary Jane will be physically assaulted, and the couple will make some changes in how they live. At first, everything will look great: the two will move to a huge brownstone building and they'll look to make their lives more stable. It's really every city dweller's dream — to move to a place big enough so you can incorporate your home life and your work and your hobbies. But when Peter's life goes into crisis — his home, his marriage, his very sanity will all be put in jeopardy. And the villains — old and new — won't let up on him just because he's having a hard time."

COSMIC POWERS COLLIDE

While Spider-Man makes New York safe, the vast spaceways of the Marvel Universe will rock with the energy of a star unleashed. The monthly **SILVER SURFER** series has introduced a host of new space-faring heroes and villains, and in 1994, all of these stellar warriors bust out on their own in the six-issue **COSMIC POWERS** limited series. Written by Ron Marz, each issue will be a 48-page extravaganza drawn by a different art team, and each will feature a different hero or villain involved in a scheme fomented by none other than Thanos.

"There'll be a common thread that runs throughout each issue of the series," Editor Craig Anderson stated. "However, in each issue, you'll get to see how each character handles themselves alone, as well as how they interact with the other heroes and villains of this epic saga."

Seven major characters will be involved in **COSMIC POWERS**, including the progenitor of the story, Thanos. Anderson explained, "the plot involves a struggle between Thanos and the villainous conqueror named Tyrant. The story begins with Thanos discovering that Tyrant has something of such

value that he [Thanos] *must* have it. But instead of confronting Tyrant directly, Thanos does what he does best and manipulates the other characters to wrestle what he desires from Tyrant."

The lineup for **COSMIC POWERS** is:

— *THANOS* drawn by Ron Lim and Jimmy Palmiotti

— *TERRAX* drawn by Jeff Moore and Keith Williams

— *JACK OF HEARTS AND GANYMEDE* drawn by Andy Smith and Bill Anderson

— *LEGACY* drawn by Ron Lim and Bob Almond

— *MORG* drawn by Tom Grindberg and Bob Almond

— *TYRANT* drawn by Angel Medina and Bill Anderson

THE DARKEST QUEST

Since first finding the mysterious amulet that transformed his life, Chris Powell has fought crime as Darkhawk. In **DARKHAWK #25**, Chris and readers found out that the amulet came from the far reaches of space, and that whenever Chris becomes Darkhawk his unconscious human body is switched with that of the hero and kept on the self-aware intergalactic spaceship known as *Osch*. Now in "The Amulet Quest" (**DARKHAWK #38-#41**) Darkhawk must gather the remaining amulets, spread throughout the cosmos, to prevent the destruction of the universe. The appearance of his greatest foe, Evilhawk, stands between him and the success of his mission. Before "The Amulet Quest" ends, however, Chris himself will be tempted by the lure of these mysterious amulets. "The power the amulets promise, and the danger that they hold, may be more than Chris Powell is able to deal with," series writer Danny Fingeroth observed.

HOT ENDING, COOL BEGINNINGS

And what are the editors throughout the hallowed halls of Marvel most looking forward to in the coming new year? What are the hottest of the hot projects coming up? "Hot Sheet" asked, and they responded:

• Bobbie Chase: "I'm really excited about the double-sized 50th issue of **GHOST RIDER**, where we will have one of the most shocking re-introductions of a character to a book ever."

• Rob Tokar: "The **NEW WARRIORS** will be great next year, mainly because we're going to continue presenting exciting cutting edge stories while incorporating the various solo Warrior's books (**NOVA**, **NIGHT THRASHER**). This should make the New Warriors line the most cohesive family of books in the Marvel Universe."

• Kelly Corvese: "**X-MEN UNLIMITED #4** is one of the highlights of next year. Scott Lobdell and Richard Bennet will bring us the story of the true relationship between Mystique and Nightcrawler. It's a question that readers have wanted answered for years and now we finally get to tell it."

• Ralph Macchio: "**DAREDEVIL** is in for an interesting time next year as we take him in an all-new direction. Following the 'Fall From Grace' storyline, we jump into a multi-parter called 'Tree of Knowledge,' a story in which DD is forced to tangle with Baron Strucker as Strucker tries to take over the new fiber-optic information highway. Before it's all over, Captain America will be forced into the fray as well."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This issue marks the final installment of the "Hot Sheet," as columnist Jerry Novick moves up to the "Up Front" section of the magazine to keep our news coverage on the cutting edge. We want to thank Jerry for an entertaining year and a half of hot picks. Look for him on page one, starting next issue!*

MARVELS made its debut last month — a four-issue limited series by Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross dramatizing the birth of the super heroes as witnessed through the eyes of the ordinary man.

Before MARVELS...

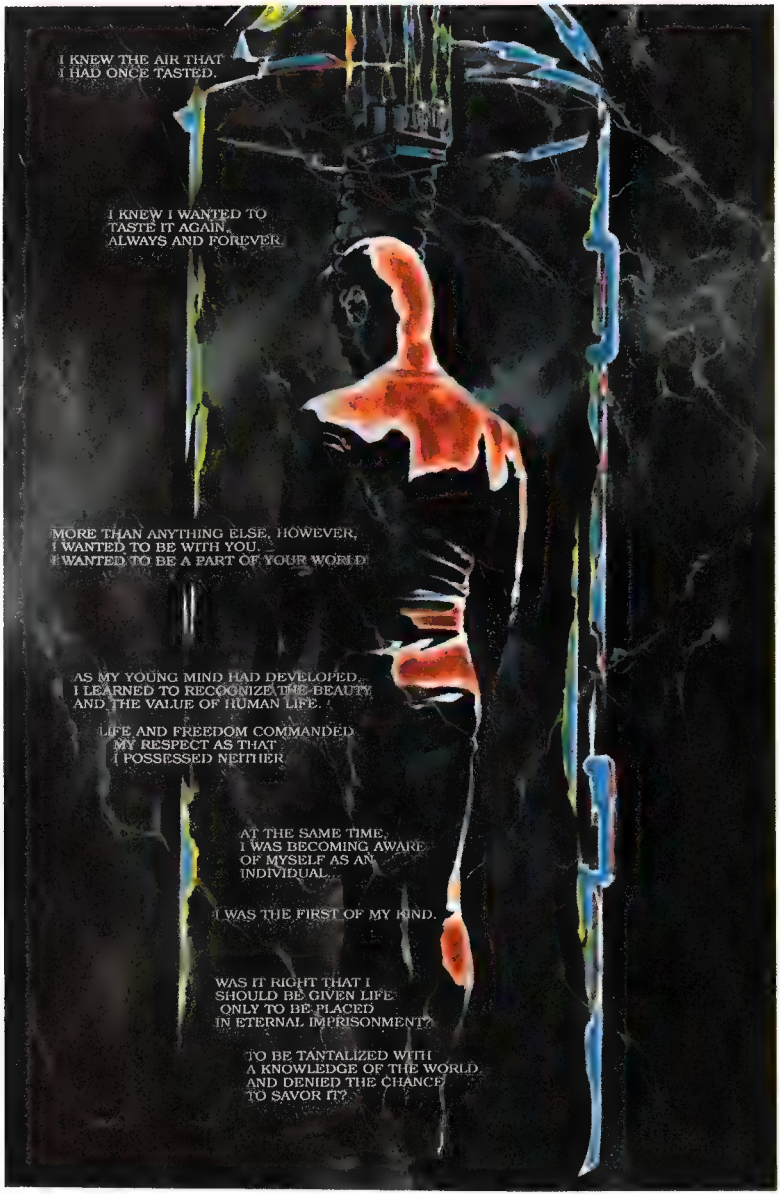
a few years ago, artist Alex Ross was struck by the urge to produce an image of the *original* man afire — the Human Torch. He began a proposal for a fully painted homage to 1939's **MARVEL COMICS #1**, and with his friend, Steve Darnall, produced a twelve-page "Origin of the Human Torch." It was not scheduled to be a part of **MARVELS**, since it is told strictly from the perspective of the Torch himself.

Here is the final installment for this "unseen **MARVELS** tale." Alex is also allowing MARVEL AGE to reproduce some of his "concept sketches," a series of painted illustrations produced to accompany the proposal, to appear with the introduction to each installment.

Enjoy.

— Steve Saffel

***THUS FAR:** Professor Phineas Horton, a scientist decades ahead of his time, has created an artificial man. But this android possesses a spectacular flaw; upon contact with air, he bursts into flames. Despite the miraculous nature of his creation, Horton is subjected to the fears and derision of his fellow man, and his "offspring" is labelled a menace. Thus Horton succumbs to public pressure and places his masterpiece in a sealed drum locked in concrete. But the inventor wires the tomb for sound and educates his Human Torch via recorded lessons. Yet, trapped in the blackness, the Torch cannot help but yearn for freedom and the company of his "father..."*


I KNEW THE AIR THAT I HAD ONCE TASTED.
I KNEW I WANTED TO TASTE IT AGAIN. ALWAYS AND FOREVER.
MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, HOWEVER, I WANTED TO BE WITH YOU. I WANTED TO BE A PART OF YOUR WORLD.
AS MY YOUNG MIND HAD DEVELOPED, I LEARNED TO RECOGNIZE THE BEAUTY AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE.
LIFE AND FREEDOM COMMANDED MY RESPECT AS THAT I POSSESSED NEITHER.
AT THE SAME TIME, I WAS BECOMING AWARE OF MYSELF AS AN INDIVIDUAL.
I WAS THE FIRST OF MY KIND.
WAS IT RIGHT THAT I SHOULD BE GIVEN LIFE ONLY TO BE PLACED IN ETERNAL IMPRISONMENT?
TO BE TANTALIZED WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD AND DENIED THE CHANCE TO SAVOR IT?

SALVATION FINALLY CAME.
A TINY CRACK IN MY CONCRETE SURROUNDINGS BROUGHT IN THE SWEET AIR THAT I HAD CRAVED FOR SO LONG.
IN ONE ABRUPT MOMENT A CATACLYSMIC BURST OF COLOR, LIGHT, AND SOUND..
I WAS FREE.
AS AT THE MOMENT OF MY BIRTH
I SCREAMED..
I WAS FINALLY FREE TO BREATHE AGAIN; TO FEEL THE RUSH OF HEAT ANIMATE MY FRAME
MY FATHER TRIED TO CALL ME BACK
BUT KNOWING WHAT HE HAD DENIED ME I RAN..
AFRAID OF BEING IMPRISONED AGAIN.

I RAN BLINDLY INTO THE NIGHT AND EXPERIENCED AGAIN THE PANIC AND ASTONISHMENT THAT MY MENACING APPEARANCE PROVOKED IN PEOPLE.
I HAVE SINCE LEARNED TO CONTROL MY CONDITION...
AND HAVE COME TO MEAN SOMETHING VERY DIFFEREN TO THIS SOCIETY IN WHICH I NOW BELONG.
AS I HAVE LEARNED SINCE,
I WAS NOT THE FIRST ANOMALY TO EXIST, BUT ON THAT DAY OF MY FREEDOM IN 1939 THIS WORLD HAD ITS FIRST CONFRONTATION WITH THE FANTASTIC.
THE GOLDEN AGE OF MIRACLES WOULD BEGIN, AND IN THE YEARS TO COME THE WORLD WOULD KNOW THE PRESENCE OF THE UNNATURAL AND EXTRAORDINARY AS PART OF REALITY.

REVELATIONS FROM THE DEAD SEA SKROLLS

LETTERS

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. Attention, correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's lilting letter column title comes to us straight from alien antiquity. . .and the mind of Todd Adam Gross of Ballaire, TX. Thanks, Todd!

Despite Todd's major archeological find, we still need a nifty new title every single month. So brush off that pith helmet and dig in! If we use one of your ideas, we'll credit you right here!

Hello, Marvel,

I am very interested in purchasing the **REN & STIMPY** comic book collection. I read that ten were being drawn. Please let me know how I can obtain these comics.

Brock Pitzer
Box 88920
Steamboat Springs, CO 80488

Good news, Brock: Marvel's REN & STIMPY SHOW looks as though it'll have a whole lot more than ten issues! We'll keep publishing the series just as long as people want to read it. You should be able to find copies of THE REN & STIMPY SHOW at your local newsstand or comics specialty shop. Or you can order a one-year (12-issue) subscription by sending a check or money order for $21.00 to: Subscription Department, Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016. And if you want to catch up on the stories you've missed so far, you may want to check out the first two REN & STIMPY trade paperbacks, collecting the early issues, with more books to come! Happy happy! Joy joy!

Of course, what could be more joyful than our LETTER OF THE MONTH? This time around, we've picked two letters for the place of honor, since both deal with Marvel's ventures into the fearsome world of film. . .

Dear Marvel Comics,

Greetings from the edge of the world. I greatly enjoy the forms of art and storylines you provide. I happened to be reading **MARVEL AGE #127** and a question dawned on me: given the many projects that Marvel and its associates have been formulating, wouldn't it be easier if they were put in animated form instead of live action? Not that I could choose between them. But for hardcore Marvel fans, we could see the end product sooner. Just thought I'd drop a line and ask.

Duane Black, Watcher
595 East Spring St.
Wytheville, VA 24382

Dear Sirs,

I live in Port Isabel, Texas and I've been collecting comics for eight months. It's not long but I really enjoy all the X-Men sagas. They seem to be taking up more and more of my time and money every day.

I really enjoy the stories, but I would like to bring an idea to your masterminds. Would it be possible for you to make some movies of the X-Men or Spider-Man? Not the cartoon movie style, but with real actors and spectacular special effects.

(Name and address withheld by request)

Well, guys, a first draft of the script for the long-awaited, live-action SPIDER-MAN movie has been turned in by *Terminator* director Jim Cameron, and it's scheduled to start filming in 1995. For more details on that project and others, live action *and* animated, check out last issue's interview with Marvel Films mogul Avi Arad. And while it's true that the special effects used in these movies take time, so does animation. In fact, it takes 24 separate drawings to produce just *one second* of animation. The bottom line is that, no matter what the format, quality takes time.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

Hello. I have a few questions that I have been wondering about and I hope that perhaps you can answer them.

1) Does Marvel have either an E-mail address or a fax number? If so, can you tell us what they are?

2) I have heard of a number of "fanzines" that deal with particular heroes and/or villains. Can you give me a list of these fanzines?

3) In the **OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE MASTER EDITION**, there are colored bands on the top and bottom of the individuals' and races' sheets. Exactly what do these colors stand for? My brother and I have tried sorting them out but could find no discernable shared traits among the members in each color group.

Well, I thank you very much. Until the Blob joins Weight Watchers, make mine Marvel!

Judd Baker
7088 Weller Dr.
Rockford, MI 49341

Lots of questions there, Judd. Taking them in order:

1) Marvel does indeed have a couple of fax machines, but they're for business purposes only. A lot of writers live outside New York, so they use them to send in stories (or letter columns, such as this one). Also, companies that do business with Marvel often need to fax official-type documents back and forth. All that keeps the fax

machines pretty busy. If you want to send us letters, the best way to do it is by mail.

2) A comics fanzine — or fan magazine — is a publication created by and for comic book fans. Typically, fanzines contain articles about favorite comics or characters, or original stories and comic strips, all produced by comics fans.

Some are full-fledged newspapers and magazines such as the *Comics Buyers Guide*, *Wizard*, and *Comics Shop News*. Others are Xeroxed newsletters with smaller distribution, often produced through a group effort called an amateur press association (or "apa"). We don't have a comprehensive list, but the *Comics Buyer's Guide* does occasionally list names and addresses. And we suggest you ask at your local comics shop. They may be able to point you in the right direction.

3) There's a good reason why you haven't been able to crack the color code, Judd: There isn't any! According to MARVEL UNIVERSE Editor Tom Brevoort, the color bands don't relate to any classification system. They're there purely as a design element ("to add a swath of life," as Tom put it), and the choice of colors depends on what color best complements the character's costume.

Now it's time to pull out our trench coat, eye patch and cigar, and check our secret letter drop for a coded communique from one of our favorite Wild Agent of Marvel in our monthly. . .

We're talking a slightly different tack and publishing a WAM-related letter from a non-Agent. If you want to join in a future jam session, be sure to write on official WAM stationery or include your WAM I.D. number in your letter. Don't worry; we'll make sure that no one from Hydra even gets close to it.

Dear MARVEL AGE,
Please send me information on how to become a Wild Agent of Marvel. I can't find sign-up forms anywhere.
Thank you.

Kent S. Kochi
Sacramento, CA 95831

Truth to tell, Kent, official WAM Guy Paul Curtis tells us that right now, WAM is temporarily closed for renovation. Paul's in the process of refurbishing the club and making it bigger and better than ever. So while WAM is under construction, we can't accept any new members.

But never fear! All current Agents will maintain their memberships and the all-new, all-improved WAM will be back and open for business soon. In the meantime, you can still write to Paul here at Marvel, and he will forward you all the relevant info ASAP.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
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(REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities.
9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (DMM Section 424.12 only). The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes. (Check one.) ☐ Has not changed during preceding 12 months. ☐ Has changed during preceding 12 months. (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)
10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION.
A. Total No. Copies Printed (net press run). Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 158,567 Actual no. of single issue nearest to filing date: 128,300
B. Paid and/or requested Circulation: 1) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales. Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 81,142 Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 58,900 2) Mail subscriptions. Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 425. Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 400
C. Total Paid and/or requested Circulation (sum of 10B1 and 10B2) Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 81,567 Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 59,300
D. Free Distribution by mail, carrier, or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies. Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 125 Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 125.
E. Total Distribution (sum of C and D) Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 81,692. Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 59,425.
F. Copies Not Distributed: 1) Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing. Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 500 Actual no. copies of Single issue nearest to filing date: 500. 2) Returns from News Agents: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 77,375. Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 68,375.
G. Total (sum of E, F1 and 2 should equal net press run shown in A). Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 159,567 Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 128,300
11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signed) Diane Rivera — Business Manager

checklist

CROSSOVERS

Suicide Run

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #25 2.25
Part 8 of 10: The Punisher's enemies learn his location. 48 pages

PUNISHER #88 1.25
Part 9 of 10: The Feds battle the Mob for the Punisher.

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #54 2.25
Part 10 of 10: Concluding with 48-pages and die-cut cover.

Starblast

FANTASTIC FOUR #386 1.25
Part 11 of 12: The birth of Lyja's baby

NAMOR #48 1.25
Part 9 of 12: Guest-starring the Fantastic Four

QUASAR #56 1.25
Part 10 of 12: Quasar enters the New Universe.

STARBLAST #3 1.75
Part 8 of 12: The Stranger gains control over the Starbrand.

First Week

BIKER MICE FROM MARS #5 1.50

CABLE #9 2.00

CAPTAIN AMERICA #425 1.25

CLIVE BARKER'S PINHEAD #4 2.50
Pinhead is worshiped by the ancient Mayans.

CONAN SAGA #84 2.25
"The Shadow and the Scorpion."

DAREDEVIL #326 1.25

DARKHAWK #37 1.25

FORCE WORKS #1 1.25

GROO THE WANDERER #110 2.25
Groo is elected leader of Vellentuna.

GUN RUNNER #6 (of 6) 1.75
G.R. must stop the evil Cynodd.

HAWKEYE #3 (of 4) 1.75

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #149 1.50
A 32-page Typhoid Mary story

MONSTER MENACE #4 (of 4) 1.25
Classic 1950's terror

NAMOR #48 1.25

NIGHTSTALKERS #17 1.75

NOMAD #23 1.75
"American Dreamers," part 2 (of 4).

REN & STIMPY #16 1.75
Spotted with Elvis

SAINT SINNER #6 1.75
Defenseless against the Runesmith.

SCARLET WITCH #3 (of 4) 1.75

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #17 1.25

SPIDER-MAN MAGAZINE #1 1.95

SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA #1 (of 3) 1.25

SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #12 1.25
Doctor Octopus is paroled.

STARBLAST #3 1.75

UNCANNY X-MEN #310 1.25

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #110 1.25
Spidey tracks down the Lizard.

WILD ANGELS #1 (of 4) 1.95

Second Week

ALPHA FLIGHT #130 2.25

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #387 1.25
The Vulture attacks Peter and steals his youth.

BARBIE #39 1.25

BRATS BIZARRE #4 (of 4) 2.50
The Brats seek a cure for the virus.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE MEDUSA EFFECT 2.95

CLIVE BARKER'S HARROWERS #4 2.50
The spirit of Marc Antony trashes Times Square.

CURSE OF THE WEIRD #4 (of 4) 1.25
Classic horror tales from the Golden Age.

DEATH'S HEAD II/KILLPOWER: BATTLETIDE III #2 (of 4) 1.95
Dark Guard joins the boys in battling Battletide.

GHOST RIDER #47 1.75
There's a new Ghost Rider in town.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #46 1.25
The Beyonder clashes with Protege.

HYPERKIND #7 1.75
The team seeks the origin of the Paxis.

LOOSE CANNONS #1 (of 4) 2.50

MARVEL X-MEN COLLECTION #3 (of 3) 2.95
Showcasing art by Jim Lee

NIGHT THRASHER #6 1.75
Bandit's origin is revealed.

NOVA #3 1.75

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #25 2.25

QUASAR #56 1.25

RAVAGE 2099 #16 1.25
Ravage gets mean.

SECRET DEFENDERS #13 1.75
Thanos replaces Dr. Strange.

THE SHROUD #1 (of 4) 1.75

SILVER SABLE #22 1.25

SLEEPWALKER #33 1.25
The final issue.

WOLVERINE #79 1.75

WONDER MAN #30 1.25

X-FACTOR #100 (unadorned) 1.75

X-FACTOR #100 (adorned) 2.95

X-MEN ADVENTURES SEASON II #2 1.25

Third Week

AVENGERS #372 1.25
The end of Serai's insanity

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD #1 1.95

BLAZE #4 (of 4) 1.75

CLANDESTINE #1 1.95
Alan Davis's new series

COSMIC POWERS #1 (of 6) 2.50

DOCTOR STRANGE VS. DRACULA 1.75

DOOM 2099 #15 1.25

ECTO KID #7 1.75
Dex's mom is kidnapped.

EXCALIBUR #75 1.75

FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED #5 3.95

GAMBIT #4 (of 4) 2.00
Gambit must choose between Rogue and Belladonna.

G.I. JOE #146 1.25
Star Brigade debuts.

HELLHOUND #4 (of 4) 2.25
Satan returns to collect his due.

INCREDIBLE HULK #415 1.25

MARVEL AGE #134 1.25

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #150 1.50

MARVEL TALES #283 1.25
The return of Hobgoblin

MORBIUS #19 1.75

MORT THE DEAD TEENAGER #4 (of 4) 1.75
Mort sees it's a wonderful life.

PUNISHER #88 1.25

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #219 2.25

SPIDER-MAN #44 1.75
Spidey meets the deadly Dealer.

THUNDERSTRIKE #6 1.25

TRANSFORMERS: GENERATION 2 #5 1.75

WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #26 1.75

WHAT IF #59 1.25
"What if Wolverine led Alpha Flight?"

X-MEN #30 1.25
The wedding of Scott and Jean.

X-MEN 2099 #6 1.25

PREMIERES

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD #1 1.95
The comic debut of the MTV cartoon sensation

CLANDESTINE #1 1.95
Alan Davis's mysterious new series

COSMIC POWERS #1 (of 6) 2.50
A new limited series starring the most powerful cosmic superstars —beginning with *Thanos*

FORCE WORKS #1 1.25
The new team debuts with 48-pages and pop-up cover.

LOOSE CANNONS #1 (of 4) 2.50
Fully painted tales of an elite Warhead team

THE SHROUD #1 (of 4) 1.75
Shroud goes in search of his origin. Guest-star Spider-Man

SPIDER-MAN MAGAZINE #1 1.95
A 32-page color magazine with games, puzzles & trading cards

SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA #1 (of 3) 1.25
The first ever newspaper strip crossover

WILD ANGELS #1 (of 4) 1.95
Teaming-up Wild Thing and Dark Angel

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

CABLE #9 2.00
Cable vs. Omega Red

DARKHAWK #37 1.25
Darkhawk vs. Venom

NIGHTSTALKERS #17 1.75
The Nightstalkers vs. Dr. Strange

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #219 2.25
Conan vs. Solomon Kane

SCARLET WITCH #3 (of 4) 1.75
S.W. vs. Avengers West Coast

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #17 1.25
Spidey vs. Bloodsword

THUNDERSTRIKE #6 1.25
Thunderstrike vs. Blackwulf

WOLVERINE #79 1.75
Wolvie vs. Cyber

X-MEN 2099 #6 1.25
The X-Men vs. the Freak Show

WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #26 1.75
The Watch vs. The Avengers

Loose Cannons

Fourth Week

BARBIE FASHION #39 1.25

BOOK OF THE DEAD #4 (of 4) 1.75

DEATH'S HEAD II #16 1.95

DEATH METAL #3 (of 4) 1.95
Attacked by the Psycho-Warriors.

DEATH WRECK #3 (of 4) 1.95
Death Wreck travels to the future.

DEATHLOK #33 1.75
"Cyberstrike," part three

DOCTOR WHO CLASSIC COMICS #15 4.95

DOCTOR WHO 30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL 5.25

DR. STRANGE #63 1.75
The mystery of Strange's identity deepens.

FANTASTIC FOUR #386 1.25

GENETIX #6 1.75
Vs. Tektos and the Psycho Warriors

GHOST RIDER & BLAZE: SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #20 1.75
Blaze teams with Vengeance.

HELLSTORM #12 2.00
Daimon confronts his father.

HOKUM & HEX #7 1.75
"Bloodshed," part 2 (of 4)

IRON MAN #302 1.25
"Crash and Burn," part 2 (of 6).

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #14 Free
Marvel's February titles.

MARVELS #3 5.95

MOON KNIGHT #60 1.75
Moon Knight dies.

NEW WARRIORS #45 1.25

PUNISHER 2099 #14 1.25
Jake goes mad.

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #64 2.25

SILVER SURFER #90 1.25
The return of Legacy.

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #210 1.25
Spidey teams with the Foreigner

THOR #472 1.25
"Blood and Thunder" aftermath

VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN

WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #19 1.75
Jake and Gomez seek out their missing boss.

X-FORCE #32 1.25

X-MEN: THE WEDDING ALBUM 3.95

X-MEN CLASSIC #93 1.25
Magma & Phoenix take on the Hellfire Club.

X-MEN UNLIMITED #4 3.95
The connection between Nightcrawler and Mystique is revealed.

JANUARY SPOTLIGHT

ALPHA FLIGHT #130 2.25
The 48-page series finale.
"We wouldn't kill the whole team just to sell one issue. Or would we?" — Editor Rob Tokar

CAPTAIN AMERICA #425 2.95
With 48 pages and multi-level foil embossed cover. Will being Cap kill Steve Rogers?
"C'mon folks,; great story, hot art, cool cover—this book is a must!" — Editor Mike Rockwitz

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE MEDUSA EFFECT 2.95
A 64-page WWII special.
"It's history in the making!" — Editor Mike Rockwitz

DOCTOR STRANGE VS. DRACULA 1.75
The classic confrontation in 48 macabre pages.
"It's awesome! The match of the century!" — Editor Mort Todd

DOCTOR WHO 30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL 5.25
A 64-page color cross-time magazine celebration.
"I'm an old fan of the TV show and I'm always curious to see what the doctor's up to these days."
— Assistant Editor Lia Pelosi

EXCALIBUR #75 1.75
48-pages and a holo-grafx cover.
"Captain Britain's back and badder than ever! We're kicking off a major new storyline for the team. Big changes are in store, especially for Rachel."
— Editor Suzanne Gaffney

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #149 & 150 1.50 each
A two-part Typhoid Mary story by Ann Nocenti and Steve Lightle.
"Guest-starring Daredevil, Wolverine, and Vengeance, and introducing Steel Raven. She's tougher than The Punisher."
— Editor Richard Ashford

X-FACTOR #100 2.95
Foil-embossed, 48-page special.
"There's murder in issue #100! A member of the team dies and their ranks will never be the same again."
— Editor Kelly Corvese

X-MEN: THE WEDDING ALBUM 3.95
A 32-page glossy magazine celebrating the honeymooners.
"It's the never before told tale of Professor X's first encounter with Scott, and Scott and Jean's first meeting. It's a great read!"
— Editor Suzanne Gaffney

GUEST APPEARANCES

DAREDEVIL #326 1.25
Captain America

FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED #5 3.95
Ant-Man

HAWKEYE #3 (of 4) 1.75
War Machine

INCREDIBLE HULK #415 1.25
Silver Surfer & The Starjammers

IRON MAN #302 1.25
Venom

MORBIUS #19 1.75
Deathlok

NEW WARRIORS #45 1.25
X-Factor

NOVA #3 1.75
Spider-Man

UNCANNY X-MEN #310 1.25
Madelyne Pryor

WONDER MAN #30 1.25
Iron Man

X-FORCE #32 1.25
New Warriors

VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN #2 (of 3) 2.95
Morbius and Demogoblin

JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						NEW YEARS DAY 1
HAPPY BIRTHDAY DON HECK 2	BUD LAROSA TOM ARTIS 3	CHIC STONE 4	MORDECAI P. BOGGS 5	HUGH HAYNES 6	BOB WIACEK MARIA McCAW 7	KEN STEACY JOHN WELLINGTON VALERIE HAYNES HOLLY REANDEAU THOMAS CONBOY 8
ENTER THANOS!	BOB HARRAS BRAD JOYCE 10	11	SKI CHRIS WILLIAMS 12	13	RUDY NEBRES CHANTE FOSTER JOHN TARTAGLIONE 14	KEVIN TINSLEY BOB PETRECCA 15
	TOM BREVOORT 17	BOB RISCICA 18	MILT SHIFFMAN 19	KEITH POLLARD ERICKA HARRIS DEBRA BRUST MARTIN LUTHER 20 KING JR. DAY	21	HOWARD MACKIE MARSHALL ROGERS CAROL PLATT 22
23 KLAUS JANSON	24 JOHN ROMITA ED JOHNSON		SAL BUSCEMA	FRANK MILLER	THANOS ESCAPES!	
NAIROBI WASHINGTON DAWN THOMAS FRED HEMBECK 30	NANCY POLETTI PATY 31	25	26	27		

CLASSIC CLASH #1
FROM IRON MAN #55

IRON MAN AND THE DESTROYER
VS
THE BLOOD BROTHERS

MARVEL
Age
133
FEBRUARY 1994
$1.00 US $1.25 CAN 80p UK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Getting ready for the
X-Wedding
CONGRATULATIONS
matthew ryan 93
after
ANDY KUBERT
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